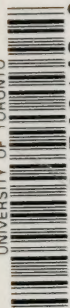


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JOHNSONIAN GLEANINGS

BY ALEYN LYELL READE

PART III

THE DOCTOR'S BOYHOOD

*"The boy is the man in
miniature."*

BOSWELL.

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TO MY GODDAUGHTER
JILL FLETCHER BINGHAM
IN AFFECTION
I DEDICATE
THIS BIOGRAPHICAL EXERCISE



PREFACE

WHEN I issued Part II of these *Johnsonian Gleanings*, in 1912, it was never contemplated that so many years would elapse before Part III, the subject of which I announced in my Preface, could win material form. But much has happened since then to excuse the long delay, and there were times when (especially to a private soldier in the trenches) the prospect of ever being able to continue the series seemed a little remote.

The present volume needs but a short introduction. In my *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, and in Part I of this series, I printed a great mass of original information which bore, directly or indirectly, upon Johnson's boyhood. But it was given in what was, necessarily, a rather indigestible form, and its thorough application to a narrative of his early years would have been a labour almost hopeless to anyone except its collector.

The first task I set myself, therefore, was to analyse and collate the various printed accounts of Johnson's boyhood, including that portion of his own invaluable "Annals" saved from the flames; to add thereto every illustrative reference that could be found elsewhere in the biographies; and to incorporate my own published information with the result. The second task was, as far as possible, to fill in all the gaps and bridge all the chasms revealed in the narrative thus constructed. This has involved much fresh research, the results of which are, to a large extent, given in the form of footnotes. But the bulkier evidences have had to be relegated to a series of Appendices, lettered in advance for reference, which will be printed as Part IV.

I hope that the story of Johnson's boyhood, thus analysed and amplified, with a wealth of illustration drawn from all manner of sources, will be of interest not only for the actual light it throws upon his early life, its formative circumstances and surroundings, but also as an example of how much can be

achieved by the introduction of determined and orderly method into the province of biographical research. The art of biography is the gift of the few, but the science of biography can be advanced by anyone schooled to the pursuit of truth.

In future parts I hope to carry the tale forward on the lines now laid down, and to add much to our knowledge of those dark years of Johnson's life before he won recognition and fame. Part V will deal with his early manhood, from his entering Pembroke College in 1728 until about 1740, a most obscure period of his life, which no conscientious biographer can approach without a grave sense of the inadequacy of his material.

My thanks are due to all those kind friends and correspondents who have helped me in various ways to gain information, among whom I specially must mention Councillor W. A. Wood, of Lichfield, that most stalwart of local Johnsonians, and the Rev. F. A. Homer, of Handsworth, who has made a great many searches for me in the Midlands.

ALEYN LYELL READE.

*Treleven House, Blundellsands,
Nr. Liverpool.*

14 January, 1922.

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Did Michael travel in Scotland ?—The tanning business, and how it was conducted.

To the small village of Cubley, in Derbyshire, belongs the honour of being the place of origin of the Johnson family, so far as its history has been traced. But it is clear, from the absence in the registers of references to the family before the birth of the Doctor's father, that Cubley was not the real cradle of the race.* We are at present free to speculate as to whence his forefathers originally came ; and almost equally free to wonder what was their exact position in life, and whether it was from the soil alone that they had won a modest living in the quiet dales of Derbyshire.

If we were to credit Stebbing Shaw, the learned historian of Staffordshire, who was already a grown man when Dr. Johnson met with fortitude the death he had so long strangely feared, we should have to believe that the lexicographer's father was the first who "emerged from the obscure occupations of his family, who lived at Cubley as day-labourers."† Until quite recently there was no evidence with which to rebut this statement, but even without such evidence it was reasonably arguable that two intelligent, decently educated booksellers,‡ whose sister seems to have married into a family of county rank,§ were not likely to have sprung from the humble cottage of a day-labourer.

Cubley stands in a quiet part of the county, where the tide of progress has never flowed with much force. Five and a half miles south of Ashburne, and almost the same distance north-east of Uttoxeter, it boasted in 1821 a population of only 439, nearly the whole of which was engaged in agriculture or occupations allied thereto. Even then no manufacture at all was carried on there. It is a curious fact that the manor of Cubley belonged to the Earls of Chesterfield, from whom Dr. Johnson's famous antagonist|| descended : it came to the family through the marriage of Sir Thomas Stanhope to Margaret,

* *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 210.

† *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

‡ Michael and his younger brother, Andrew Johnson, concerning whom see *post*, pp. 12, 17, 108.

§ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 249 ; and *post*, p. 21.

|| See *post*, p. 152.

daughter and co-heir of Sir John Port, of Cubley and Etwall, about 1560.*

It was, then, in this rural village that Michael Johnson was born, as the Doctor told us on the gravestone which he placed to his parents' memory in the church of St. Michael's at Lichfield. The inscription further stated that the year of his birth was 1656.† The Cubley register shows that "Michael the sonne of William Johnson and Katharine his wife" was baptized on 2 April 1657,‡ so that, as the year then began on 25 March, the Doctor's date is probably strictly correct. There were three younger children baptized there: another son, whose name is illegible, but who clearly must have been Benjamin,§ on 24 February 1658/9; yet another son, Andrew, of whom we shall hear later,|| on 7 December 1660; and a daughter, Margaret, on 2 August 1663. There are no other entries relating to William and Catherine Johnson or their family in the Cubley register; and in the few entries relating to other persons named Johnson at earlier and later dates there is nothing to suggest kinship with the Doctor.¶

According to a local tradition, William Johnson lived in a small thatched cottage that stood high on Cubley Common, on the right-hand side of the road to Ashburne, and some distance from Cubley village. A drawing of it has been preserved, as it existed before its practical destruction in 1868.**

* Glover's *Derbyshire*, 1833, II., 334.

† Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, IV., 393.

‡ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 209.

§ See *post*, p. 6.

|| See *post*, p. 12.

¶ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 209-10.

** Francis Redfern, in his *History of Uttoxeter*, 2nd ed., 1886, pp. 162-3, gives a short account of this cottage, and reproduces his own sketch of it as a woodcut (which is also used to illustrate Mr. Sargisson's article in *The Bookman* for Sept. 1909; see *post*, p. 37). Redfern tells us that a family named Bull lived for 400 years on a farm adjoining this cottage, but moved to Leek in 1853, with Mr. Bull's brother-in-law, a man of "an advanced age," who "used to speak of this cottage as that of the father of Michael Johnson." It was occupied by one John Coates for some 40 years, until 1868, when it was "entirely altered by improvements." Mr. J. Payne Hall, of Uttoxeter, has kindly made enquiry for me, and learned from a native of Cubley, who remembers the old cottage with the thatched roof, that, when it was rebuilt in 1868, nothing of the old building was retained except a portion of one wall, which is still incorporated in the present house. The value of this tradition is problematical, but it is entitled to be preserved.

As to the origin of William Johnson, and his history before 1657, we have no clue. But there is no reason to doubt that he came of local stock. There were Johnsons in plenty scattered over that part of Derbyshire during the seventeenth century, some of whom may well have been his kinsfolk; and a thorough exploring of all the Johnson wills at Lichfield for the period might throw light on the point. But a mere list of them does not give very much hope. There is no will of any Johnson of Cubley; and the Doctor's own immediate kindred seem to have had a rooted objection to declaring their testamentary wishes in writing, the only one who broke the family tradition in this respect being his uncle Andrew in 1729—and his effort was but a feeble one.*

Sir Walter Scott, writing to Croker in 1829, after humorous allusion to Miss Seward's story of Johnson having had an uncle hanged (whom he is certainly wrong in identifying as Andrew), quotes a "report that Johnson's grandfather (like the grandsire of Rare Ben) was actually an Annandale Johnstone, who altered the spelling of his name, *euphoniæ gratiâ*, or to Anglicize it."† This would be a very pretty tale indeed, if true, and one adding a further flavour of humorous perversity to Johnson's denunciations of Scotland and its inhabitants. But, like most such tales, it is too good to be true. Yet those to whom it appeals can point to a very remarkable coincidence to support their romantic inclination of mind, for in 1675 there was undoubtedly buried at Lichfield a genuine Annandale "Johnson"—and this after we know the Doctor's family had settled in the town.‡ And this is perhaps not the most striking coincidence of the kind to delight lovers of the curious, who may read some kind

* *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 221.

† *Croker's Correspondence and Diaries*, ed. Louis J. Jennings, II., 29.

‡ In the registers of St. Michael's, Lichfield, under 11 Mch. 1674/5, is recorded the burial of "Robert Johnson of the parish of Lockmaban in the county of Anderdale." Lockmaban is four miles from Lockerby, in Annandale, the ancient seat of the Johnstone family. Admon. of the goods of Robert Johnson, lately of the city of Lichfield, defunct, was granted at Lichfield 18 Mch. 1674/5 to George Crowther, principal creditor. Bondsmen, George Crowther, of Dalton, co. Annandale, chapman, and James Crowther, of the city and county of Lichfield. Inventory:—Waring Apparrell, 10s.; Money in purse, 14s.; Goods in his packe, £12 18s.; Total, £14 2s.; Prized by James Carruthers. Both George and James "Crowther" spell their name "Carruthers." It is clear that Robert Johnston (as no doubt he should properly have been called) was a packman, touring England with his wares; and that even

of predestination into the fact that the list of old Michael Johnson's neighbours in Lichfield included the distinguished name of James Boswell! *

"I can hardly tell who was my grandfather," said the Doctor once, to support his claim to great merit in being "zealous for subordination and the honours of birth."† Pronouncedly patriarchal in his views,‡ Johnson was here undoubtedly thinking of his father's father, of whom old Michael can have told his children little, and of whom we knew practically nothing a year ago. In his latter days Johnson wrote to the Rev. George Fletcher, then Rector of Cubley, for "extracts relative to his father and his family,"§ but he cannot have got much satisfaction. If he had applied to the Stationers' Company in London he could have got fuller information: and it is curious that this obvious source has been overlooked by all the biographers and commentators, who thus missed the acquisition of some really solid knowledge of the Johnson family.||

The Company's records show that, on 11 April 1673, Michael Johnson, son of William Johnson, late of Lichfield, yeoman, deceased, was apprenticed to Richard Symson for eight years; that, on

in Lichfield he had been able to find a countryman from his own district of Annandale. There was no "Crowther," or "Carruthers," living in Lichfield in 1695 (see *post*, p. 18).

* In the Lichfield census of 1695 (see *post*, p. 18), under Bread [Market] Street, is enumerated this household:—"John Rathbone, 42; Deb: his wife, 46; James Boswell, Batchelor, 27 years." "James Boswell and Ann Ashford" were married at St. Mary's on 4 Oct. 1696, and had children baptized there:—Little (daur.) on 20 July 1697; John, on 29 Dec. 1698; Martha, on 7 Oct. 1701; and James, on 16 May 1704. John, son of James Boswell, was buried at St. Michael's on 3 Mch. 1701½.

In 1695 Alexander Ashford and Mary his wife were living in Bore Street; their household including three unmarried daughters, the eldest of whom, Anne, was then twenty-four.

† Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, II., 261.

‡ Johnson always placed himself socially in the class to which he considered his father belonged, and did not claim to be leavened by the superior respectability of his mother's family. And when he came to die, his thoughts were all for his father's kindred: his numerous cousins on the mother's side—with the exception of the lunatic, Elizabeth Herne, towards whose keep he had been contributing (see *post*, p. 59)—were quite forgotten.

§ Shaw's *Staffordshire*, I., 324.

|| These valuable extracts from the records of the Stationers' Company, obtained through the kindness of Mr. R. T. Rivington, the Clerk, were first communicated by me to *The Times Literary Supplement* for 6 January 1921; and my letter was reinforced by a leading article in *The Times* of the same date.

6 December 1675, Benjamin Johnson, son of William Johnson, late of Lichfield, gentleman, deceased, was apprenticed to Richard Simpson for seven years ; and that, on 3 December 1683, Andrew Johnson, son of William Johnson, late of Lichfield, yeoman, was apprenticed to Benjamin Johnson, for seven years.

These extracts correct the impression that has been allowed to sink into our minds that Johnson's grandfather was something in the nature of a day-labourer. We have the testimony of his three sons that his position was that of a yeoman, or "gentleman," and, though the terms may not have a very precise significance, they at least infer that he was something a little above the ordinary small farmer.*

They also explain why after 1663 there is no further record of the family in the Cubley register. For, not long after that date, William Johnson must have left his Derbyshire home and have settled at Lichfield, twenty miles or more away, there to die while his children were quite young. It has often been wondered how Michael Johnson got his education, including some acquaintance with Latin,† in such a remote little village as Cubley ; but we can now imagine him as perhaps preceding his famous son at the grammar school of Lichfield.

According to Boswell, Michael Johnson "served his apprenticeship" at Leek. This statement he derived from Miss Seward, who had embodied it in her romantic tale of Elizabeth Blaney, which, as we shall presently see, was substantially false.‡ It need, therefore, cause us little surprise to learn that Michael served his apprenticeship in London, and not at Leek.§ Richard Simpson, his master, was a

* The writer of a column leading article in *The Daily Telegraph* for 15 Jan. 1921 is at some pains to argue that the terms "yeoman" and "gentleman" were very loosely applied, and that William Johnson, though so described, may have been only a "cottager." But as the description was given on three different occasions, by three different sons, we must accept it in its usual sense as implying a man of some moderate position, however much we may wish to associate him with a humble cottage.

† See *post*, p. 97.

‡ See *post*, p. 14.

§ John Sleigh, in his *History of the Ancient Parish of Leek*, 2nd ed., 1883, p. 210, goes so far as to tell us that Michael "served his apprenticeship (*circa* 1668-70), report has it, in the old house at the corner of Derby Street and the Market Place, then kept by one Joseph Needham, a bookseller." But Sleigh was conspicuously careless and inaccurate. He gives no authority for the existence of this Joseph Needham,

bookseller at The Three Trouts in St. Paul's Churchyard, who became Master of the Stationers' Company at the beginning of the eighteenth century. He was an Oxfordshire man,* and we do not know why he was selected to be the master, not only of Michael, but of his younger brother, Benjamin Johnson.

When William Johnson died, leaving a family of young children, his widow Katherine no doubt made a home for them.† The fact of three sons being apprenticed to the then very respectable trade of bookselling‡ does not suggest great poverty or very low circumstances,

and I have found none in the Leek register (*Staffordshire Parish Register Society*, 1919). But in Leek churchyard I found a stone with this inscription:—"Here lie the remains of Anna | Wife of Joseph Needham | Bookseller who died ye | 21st of May 1778 Aged 26." After this I felt little doubt that this must be the Joseph Needham referred to by Sleigh, and that over a century probably separated him from the coveted distinction of having been Michael Johnson's master. The whole story shows how strong a tradition can grow, if it is well fed while it is young.

* Richard, son of Thomas Simpson, of Oxfordshire, shoemaker, was apprenticed to Isaac Herbert, for 7 years, on 5 Dec. 1653. On 21 Jan. 1660 he was made free of the Company, and on 11 Apl. 1673 (the very day of Michael Johnson's apprenticeship) he took up the cloathing (*inf.* Mr. R. T. Rivington). The will of Richard Simpson, citizen and stationer of London, dated 18 May 1716:—"I have fully advanced my sons Thomas and John, by setting them up in the world, and my daurs. Mary Tidmarsh, Anne Jackson, and Elizabeth Bennett, by portions in marriage. I bequeath to my son Benjamin the messuage wherein I dwell in St. Paul's Churchyard, which I hold in his name by indenture of lease, dated 27 Feb. 1711/12, from Wm. Washbourne, M.A., warden of the Twelve Minor Canons of St. Paul, and Edward Chair, M.A., one of the said Minor Canons, for a term of 40 years, and I also give him all things relating to the trade of bookbinding. To my said three sons my 2 closes called Roses, and a barn, in Hornchurch, co. Essex, in the tenure of John Chapman, and 2 fields called Hass Crofts, and ground called Park Field, and all other my lands in Hornchurch. To my granddaur. Mercy Bennett, £200 at 21. To my grandchildren, Thomas, Sarah and John Simpson, Richard Grunwin, Elizabeth Quick, Mercy Bennett, Sarah Tidmarsh, and Susannah Simpson, £10 each. To my servant, Mary Challenor, £10. To my servant, John Jennings, 3 guineas. To my son Thomas, £300, in trust to pay the interest to my daur., Mary Tidmarsh, and another £300 to pay the interest to my daur., Anne Jackson, and another £300 to pay the interest to my daur., Elizabeth Bennett. To my son John £40. To my son Thomas, £50. Exors., my sons Thomas and Benjamin. Signed, Richd. Simpson. Wits., Clifford Clutterbuck, John Lawrence, L. Grenewell. Codicil dated 8 Apl. 1718:—"Whereas I have sold all the lands, etc., in Hornchurch, named in my will, to Nathaniel Pearce and John Mathews, for £700, I give the same money to my three sons. To my brother, Ralph Simpson, £10. Signed, Richard Simpson. Wits., Clifford Clutterbuck, L. Grenewell, Robert Fillimore. Proved 21 May 1718, in P.C.C. [Tenison 114], by the exors. named.

† Very possibly she was the "Catherine Johnson" buried at St. Mary's, Lichfield, 10 Jan. 1691/2. One "William Johnson" was buried at St. Michael's, Lichfield, on 28 Feb. 1671/2, and "Elizabeth, wife of William Johnson," on 12 July 1672.

‡ See *post*, p. 170.

and supports the idea that William Johnson must have had some little property to leave them.

Michael Johnson was sixteen years of age when he was apprenticed in 1673, and when his apprenticeship expired, in April 1681, he would, of course, be twenty-four. One of his early memories—memories, so his son tells us, of a man who “had been no careless observer of the passages of those times”^{*}—related to that occasion in December 1680 when Burnet and Sprat preached before the House of Commons on the same day.[†] He also vividly recalled the great run on Dryden’s satire, *Absalom and Achitophel*, published in 1681, as having been equalled only by that on *Sacheverell’s Trial*.[‡] Another early memory concerned the high price commanded, “when he was young in trade,” by copies of “king Edward the Sixth’s first liturgy.”[§]

His apprenticeship ended, Michael returned to Lichfield, probably to start business on his own account immediately. On 29 January 1682/3 Michael Johnson, of the city of Lichfield, bookbinder, stood surety to the marriage bond of Robert Bowley, of Uttoxeter, and Anne Needham, of Rocester—perhaps a relative of the mythical Leek bookseller. Uttoxeter, that little town which nearly a hundred years later saw the Doctor stand bareheaded in its market place, in expiation of an act of filial disobedience, is scarcely half a dozen miles from Cubley, where Michael was born. Robert Bowley duly married his Anne, who rewarded him with a numerous progeny and lived to mourn his death, at Denstone Hall, near Uttoxeter, in 1715, but there is no further record of their association with the Johnsons.||

On 5 October 1685 Michael Johnson, servant to Richard Simpson,

^{*} *Johnson’s Lives of the Poets*, ed. Birkbeck Hill, II., 37.

[†] *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, under Thomas Sprat [1635-1713].

[‡] *Johnson’s Lives of the Poets*, ed. Birkbeck Hill, I., 373.

[§] Hawkins’s *Life of Johnson*, 1787, p. 448. The first Prayer Book was published in March 1549, and its price fixed at 2s., or 3s. 4d. if bound in paste or in boards. Several more editions followed in the same year, and the years immediately succeeding, so it is not likely that copies of even the first edition would be very rare in Michael Johnson’s day. Yet in 1676 copies of the 1551 and 1552 editions, at separate sales, each fetched 16s., a considerable increase on the original price. A group of Caxton’s books, in a 1680 sale, sold at an average price of between 1s. 6d. and 2s. So that Michael’s recollection of the “high price” commanded, comparatively, by the old Prayer Book, is justified by facts. (*Inf. Mr. H. Guppy, M.A., Librarian, John Rylands Library, Manchester.*)

|| *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson’s Ancestry*, p. 278.

was made free of the Stationers' Company—four and a half years after the expiry of his apprenticeship. He never took up the cloathing of the Company, thinking, perhaps, that the formality was not worth the considerable fee involved.*

The next record of the Doctor's father is of peculiar interest. On 30 December 1686, Michael Johnson, of Lichfield, bachelor, was licensed to marry Mary Neild, of Derby, spinster. The lady whom the young bookseller had chosen for his bride was the twenty-three-year-old daughter of one Luke Neild, a prominent tradesman at Derby, who some years earlier had acted as churchwarden of All Saints'. Luke, like his son after him, was a barber, but his trade token, issued in 1667, suggests that he may also have kept an inn or coffee house. The marriage of Michael Johnson to Mary Neild we cannot find recorded at any of the Derby churches, and as Michael, nine years later, was described as a bachelor,† we may be sure that it never took place, even without evidence that in August 1688 Luke Neild's daughter Mary was the wife of one James Warner.‡

Here indeed has dry-as-dust research unveiled a romance. Strange it seems, that after more than two centuries have elapsed we should learn this tragic secret of Michael Johnson's life, a secret probably guarded from his wife and children, though if the William Grimley, of Lichfield, dyer, who stood surety to the marriage bond, was he of the name who served as Sheriff of Lichfield in 1703, junior bailiff in 1712, and senior bailiff in 1721,§ there must have been at least one person in the town who could have told the Doctor's amiable mother that she was not the first woman to make an impression upon her gloomy husband's heart. What it was which frustrated the marriage we can scarcely hope to discover now, but, however it befel, we need little imagination to see in this disappointment an initial cause for much of that "vile melancholy" which affected him in after years,|| and an explanation of why he did not marry till late middle-life, and then, apparently, without much romance.

* Information of Mr. R. T. Rivington.

† *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 217; and *post*,

p. 13.

‡ *Ibid.*, pp. 278-80.

§ Harwood's *Lichfield*, pp. 431-2.

|| Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 35.

This early love affair of Michael's suggests that he had already, at the age of twenty-nine, attained a position of some security, else he could hardly have been the accepted lover of Mary Neild. When she married James Warner she brought her husband a sum of £165, which on her father's death was increased by a further instalment to £300—a very decent little marriage portion in those days of such vastly different values.* Her only brother, Thomas Neild, also a barber, died a month before his father, in 1688, while he was churchwarden of All Saints'.†

However Michael's feelings may have been lacerated by this unhappy episode, it does not seem to have interfered with his business activities. He appears very early to have won a respectable place in his trade, so that, although never apparently able to consolidate his gains, he must have possessed considerable enterprise and business ability of a kind, even if he lacked certain qualities of method and judgment without which even energy, intelligence and resource fail to bring their proper reward. The fathers of men of genius are often but shadowy figures, whose sole claim upon us lies in their having had famous sons. But Michael Johnson, the Lichfield bookseller, has always maintained a modest position of his own, independent of his son's fame. For not only was he one of the pioneers of bookselling in the Midlands, but also the possessor of sufficient individuality to mark him out from the common ruck of men.

In 1687 appeared a book entitled *The Touchstone of Medicines*, by Sir John Floyer, the eminent Lichfield physician,‡ the title page of which informs us that it was printed in London "for Michael Johnson, Bookseller," and was "to be sold at his shops at Litchfield and Uttoxiter, in Staffordshire; and Ashby-de-la-Zouch, in Leicester-shire."§ In the same year his name also appears on the title page of a *Syncritical Grammar*, by Samuel Shaw, master of the free-school at Ashby-de-la-Zouch, again with reference to his three shops.|| We may be forgiven for doubting whether Michael's business was quite so

* See *post*, pp. 47-8.

† *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 279-80.

‡ See *post*, p. 66.

§ *Notes and Queries*, 3rd S., V., 33.

|| Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, vol. VI., Addenda, p. xl.; Napier's *Boswell*, IV., 283-4.

extensive an organization as is here suggested. Probably he merely opened a bookstall at Uttoxeter, and at Ashby-de-la-Zouch, on market days. It will be remembered that the Doctor's touching penance at Uttoxeter was to atone for having "refused to attend his father to Uttoxeter market."*

On 15 December 1687 his name occurs in a list of subscribers towards the recasting of the Cathedral bells. The amount he promised was ten shillings,† a very respectable sum, as money went then, for a young tradesman to contribute towards such an object. In 1688 he was appointed churchwarden of St. Mary's, Lichfield—Boswell tells us that he was "a zealous high-church man."‡ But in spite of this evidence of his practical interest in ecclesiastical affairs, he does not appear to have been a strict observer of the Sabbath, for he took a special delight in offending his wife's rich and orthodox cousin, Mrs. Harriotts, by sending his horses from home on a Sunday.§ In 1690 "Mr. Johnson in Litchfield" was one of the booksellers appointed to take subscriptions for Anthony à Wood's *Athenæ Oxonienses* and *Fasti Oxonienses*, and to deliver the books when ready.||

Travelling as he did about the country, seeking out book lovers who lived remote from the towns, Michael must have become pretty widely known in the Midland area. On 16 February 1690/1 we find him standing as a surety for the proper administration of the estate of the late Rev. Thomas Adderley, Vicar of Eccleshall,¶ some two dozen miles from Lichfield. Possibly Mr. Adderley was a book-loving parson whose friendship he had gained through a common interest in literature.

In 1691 the name of "Mich. Johnson, Bookseller in Leichfield," appears as publisher on the title page of a rare pamphlet entitled *The Happy Sinner: or the Penitent Malefactor*. This curious brochure contained the last prayers and injunctions of one Richard Cromwell, a surgeon in the Army, who was executed at Lichfield for murder on 3 July 1691, after bequeathing to the country his seven choicest

* Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, IV., 373.

† Harwood's *Lichfield*, p. 69.

‡ Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 36-7.

§ See *post*, p. 60.

|| Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, vol. VI., Addenda, p. xl.

¶ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 257.

remedies for all the common ills of the flesh. The ingredients of these remedies were all to be had of the apothecaries, "except the Queen of Hungarie's Water," which was retailed by Michael Johnson himself.*

We have already seen that Benjamin Johnson, like his elder brother Michael, was apprenticed to Richard Simpson, on 6 December 1675, and that, on 3 December 1683, the youngest brother, Andrew Johnson, was apprenticed to Benjamin,† then just a year out of his time. It is to be regretted that the career of Benjamin Johnson, a hitherto unknown uncle of the Doctor's, has not been traced: it would be interesting to know his trade record.‡ Described as servant to Richard Simson, he was made free of the Stationers' Company on 4 June 1683, but, like Michael, he did not take up the cloathing.§

Andrew Johnson's name has come down to us only through his nephew having told Mrs. Thrale, with natural pride, that he "kept the ring in Smithfield (where they wrestled and boxed) for a whole year, and never was thrown or conquered."|| That he became a reputable bookseller we have been left to find out for ourselves. It will have been noticed that, at the time of his apprenticeship, he was twenty-three, and the only reasonable explanation for this very late start on a serious career is that his athletic achievements must have engrossed his attention to such an extent as to blind him to the fact that they would not provide him with a permanent livelihood.

Andrew's apprenticeship expired in December 1690, and he did not take up the Company's freedom. This might be explained by his having left London, where Benjamin presumably carried on his business, and not considered it worth while.¶|| He seems to have married

* *Dr. Johnson and Mrs. Thrale*, by A. M. Broadley, 1910, pp. 80-1. The printer of the pamphlet was "R. Clavel, at the Peacock, St. Paul's Church Yard." See *Notes and Queries*, 7th Series, X., 115.

† See *ante*, p. 6.

‡ There does not seem to be any will of his, or administration of his estate, preserved in P.C.C. or at Lichfield. It seems clear, however, that he left no family; certainly he had no male descendants living at the time of Dr. Johnson's death in 1784. See *post*, IV., Appendix A.

§ *Inf.* Mr. R. T. Rivington.

|| Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 149.

¶ *Inf.* Mr. R. T. Rivington.

immediately on the expiry of his apprenticeship,* and to have settled in Lichfield, to assist Michael with his shop. This arrangement continued for some years, and in 1695, already a widower, he was still living with Michael in Market Street, the household being completed by Simon Martin, an apprentice, aged 16, and Ann Deakin, a servant, aged 27.†

Simon Martin is the only apprentice of Michael Johnson's of whom we have record, but he helps to illustrate the respectability of bookselling in those days and of Michael's position in the trade particularly. For the boy was the younger son of another Simon Martin, a notary public in Lichfield, and grandson of yet another Simon Martin: his father and grandfather were both men of good position and education.‡ His father died when little Simon was only ten or eleven, so that on the mother must have fallen the responsibility for apprenticing her son to Michael Johnson. The father's books, writings, and muniments went mostly to the elder son, but the widow was desired to give some of them to Simon, who perhaps had already shown bookish proclivities. It is pleasant to know that Michael Johnson's apprentice did credit to his master: he settled as a bookseller at Leicester, where he filled various public offices, becoming Mayor of the town in 1728.§

* Michael, son of Andrew Johnson, was baptized 8 Aug. 1691, and Catherine, dau. of Andrew Johnson, on 1 Apl. 1693, both at St. Mary's, Lichfield. These children were not living in Lichfield in 1695, but might, of course, have been relegated to the care of their mother's people. I have no further record of them, and in any case they left no descendants (see *post*, IV., Appendix A).

† See *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 217. The Lichfield census was in 1695 (see *post*, p. 18), not in 1692 as there suggested, and Michael Johnson's household occurs under "Sadler *alias* Market Street." Concerning Ann Deakin, see *post*, p. 94.

‡ It was probably the grandfather Simon Martin who wrote to Elias Ashmole, on 22 June 1634, to give him notice of his father's death at Lichfield (*Life of Elias Ashmole, Esq., In the Way of Diary Written by Himself*); and who wrote to him again, on 20 Oct. 1656, from Lichfield, "inquiring whether and how probate of wills was settled, and whether he was likely to gain employment therein as a notary" (Rupert Simms's *Bibliotheca Staffordiensis*, p. 280).

§ *Johnsonian Gleanings*, ante, I., 18. Mr. Henry Hartopp, of Leicester, has kindly supplied the following independent account of Simon Martin:—"This man appears to have come from Ashby de la Zouch [where Michael Johnson had a branch of his business—see ante, pp. 10–11], and settled at Leicester, or rather in the exempt portion of the town outside the city boundaries, known as the 'Bishop's Fee,' about the year

It is, perhaps, not unfair, after a genuine element of romance has been thrown into Michael's life by the revelation of an early love affair probably unknown even to his nearest and dearest, that we should be permitted to "impoverish the public stock of harmless pleasure" by depriving him of a romantic experience which his biographers have dwelt upon with a simple wonder that almost invites the hatchet of the brutal critic. Everyone is familiar with the tale of poor Elizabeth Blaney and her unrequited passion for the heroically proportioned bookseller—Michael is said to have been cast in a larger mould and to have displayed even greater strength than his more famous son*—for it is the earliest incident recorded in Boswell's pages. We are told that, while he was serving his apprenticeship at Leek, Mistress Blaney

conceived a violent passion for him; and though it met with no favourable return, followed him to Lichfield, where she took lodgings opposite to the house in which he lived, and indulged her hopeless flame. When he was informed that it so preyed upon her mind that her life was in danger, he with a generous humanity went to her and offered to marry her, but it was then too late: her vital power was exhausted; and she actually exhibited one of the very rare instances of dying for love. She was buried in the cathedral of Lichfield: and he, with a tender regard, placed a stone over her grave with this inscription:—

1701. He was admitted a Freeman, as a 'stranger,' 16 Sept. 1702, paying a fee of £20: became a Councillor shortly afterwards, Chamberlain in 1715, Alderman in 1721, Bailiff in 1727, and was elected Mayor of Leicester on St. Matthew's Day, 1728. In an old MS. he is described as a bookseller and printer, but he also appears to have been the landlord of the White Horse Inn, Gallowtree Gate, Leicester; at any rate a man of the same name kept it in 1710. He voted at the Elections of 1719 and 1741, his freehold property being at Mountsorrel. He married at St. Margaret's, Leicester, 22 June 1701, Anne, daughter of Alderman Thomas Ayre, of Leicester, by whom he had issue:—(1) Thomas Martin, who was elected Mayor of Leicester in 1750, also a bookseller and printer, born 1702, died intestate 1764, aged 62, bur'd at St. Martin's, Leicester; he married and left issue; (2) Anne Martin, bapt. 14 Sept. 1703 at St. Martin's, living 1716; (3) Hannah Martin, bapt. 7 Apl. 1705 at St. Martin's, living 1716; (4) Simon Martin, bapt. 11 May 1706 at St. Martin's, buried at St. Margaret's, 13 Nov. 1711; (5) John Martin, bapt. 9 Aug. 1707 at St. Martin's, living 1716. Alderman Simon Martin died intestate at the latter part of 1744 or early in 1745, and was buried at St. Margaret's, Leicester. Administration granted 6 May 1745, by the Prebendal Court of St. Margaret's, Leicester, to his son, Thomas Martin of Leicester, bookseller and printer." Mr. A. W. Read, of Leicester, tells me that the title page of *The Leicestershire Poll* (as taken 17 Dec. 1719) bears the imprint:—"London Printed, and are to be sold by Simon Marten, Bookseller, at his Shops, in Leicester, Loughborough and Hinckley, 1720."

* Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 35; Piozzi's *Anecdotes of the late Samuel Johnson*, 2nd ed. 1786, p. 4.

"Here lies the body of Mrs. Elizabeth Blaney, a stranger. She departed this life the 2nd of September, 1694."*

In the way of accepting as true this delightful incident—"somewhat romantick, but so well authenticated" as to make Boswell feel that he could not omit it—there are only three real difficulties. One is that, as we have already seen, Michael Johnson was not apprenticed at Leek, but in London.† Another is that, at the time of her death, he had been resident in Lichfield for at least eleven and a half years, which suggests that "dying for love" is a process as prolonged as it is painful—that unrequited passion consumes by a very slow fire. And the third little difficulty is that for full five years Elizabeth Blaney had been the valued servant of a family living in the Cathedral Close. Those whose love of sentiment constrains them to cling to such a romance can still urge that she *may* have loved Michael Johnson, but sensible people will wisely decline to believe any portion of a story the substance of which will not bear investigation. And as this particular tale came from Anna Seward‡—no female Washington—we need not be over-squeamish about rejecting it.

These are the stubborn facts in collision with which a cherished romance is shattered beyond repair. Charles Hinton, late citizen and grocer of London, a son of Samuel Hinton, D.C.L., of Lichfield, and grandson of Sir Robert Chester, when he lay a-dying at his house in Lichfield Close in July 1689, made a will in which he left "to my servant Elizabeth Blaney the summe of five pounds to buy her mourning"; and she witnessed the will. Charles Hinton's widow, a daughter of Sir Rowland Okeover, of Okeover, lived on in the Close, and when "Elizabeth Blany, of the Close of Lichfield, Spinster," made a will in the May preceding her own death, she appointed her mistress, Martha Hinton, widow, as sole executrix, and left so much money to her young master, Charles Hinton the second, "as will buy him a handsome gould watch." Michael Johnson she did not mention, but

* Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 37; Shaw's *Staffordshire*, I., 251.

† See *ante*, p. 6.

‡ It first appeared in *The Gentleman's Magazine* for 1785, pt. I., p. 100, where it is included in a letter from John Nichols, to whom Miss Seward had sent some reminiscences of Dr. Johnson. According to her, the Doctor had told her the story in the summer of 1784.

that there was some link between them is clear from the fact that he and his brother Andrew appraised her goods and chattels, the total value of which, nineteen pounds, was made up by money at interest, ten pounds ; money in her possession, four pounds ; and wearing apparel, five pounds.*

The nature of this link we cannot at present define. It will be shown later on that, in all probability, Michael had a sister, Katherine Johnson, who married, about 1685, Dr. Gerard Skrymsher, a man as much her senior in years as he was her social superior.† Now this Gerard had a niece, Elizabeth Skrymsher, who in 1666 married Edward Blayney, of Gregynog Hall, Montgomeryshire, son of Sir Arthur Blayney, of Shien Castle, co. Monaghan, and grandson of Edward, first Lord Blayney. Edward Blayney, like many another unfortunate scion of a noble house, ended his days in the Fleet prison, in July 1669, his young widow Elizabeth renouncing administration of his estate.‡ As Miss Blaney's mother was named Elizabeth, it seemed to me very possible that the explanation of Michael Johnson's association with her lay in her being a grand-niece of Dr. Skrymsher. But this theory seems to be no longer tenable.§

* *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 266-8.

† See *post*, p. 21.

‡ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 268-9.

§ At the preceding reference I gave much information of the Blayneys, which all seemed to be favourable to my theory, though I could find no evidence of Edward Blayney having left a daughter, the printed pedigrees indeed stating that he had no issue. But since then I have found another Chancery suit, of which the following is an abstract :—

28 Apl. 1670. Complaint by Peter Draper, of St. Paul, Covent Garden, co. Middx., cook, that Edward Blaney, of Trigonon, co. Montgomery, Esq., now decd., was in his lifetime indebted to complainant in the sum of £90 16s. 7d. and became bound in £180 to pay the same within a month, and in Easter Term 21 Charles II in the Court of King's Bench confessed judgment to complainant ; the said Edward in July 21 Charles II died intestate, being then seised of real estate of £800 a year and of a personal estate of £1000 or more, and Henry Blaney did enter upon the same lands as heir in tail, and Thomas Blaney, of Trigonon, Esq., uncle of decd., upon the personal estate, the same having been sold them by the said Edward, and they now give out that the estate of the said Edward was seised by the late Sheriff of Montgomery by reason of some execution against the said Edward at the suit of some person unknown to complainant. In Michaelmas term last complainant obtained a judgment against them in the King's Bench, as executors of the said decd., and they now give out that Elizabeth Blaney has taken out letters of administration, so that complainant cannot discover what land he died seised of nor of what personal estate, nor for how much the

Two things are clear about Miss Elizabeth Blaney. One is that she was not a native of Lichfield—indeed that she was “a stranger” to that part of the country altogether. The other is that she was looked upon as a gentlewoman—the “Mistress” prefixed to her name on her monument and in the Cathedral register indicates that. The conditions of domestic service were quite different in those days, and gentlefolk not uncommonly employed even their own kindred in their households and had not learned to distinguish them as “companions” and “governesses.” The fact that her master left her as much as five pounds for mourning points to her status having been superior to that of an ordinary servant; and when her mother was buried at the Cathedral in 1699 it was as “Mrs. Elisabeth Blaney, Widow.”*

We have seen† that Andrew Johnson was living with Michael at

Sheriff sold the estate, and whether the cattle he sold was not put again into the ground of the said Edward Blaney, and desires the said Elizabeth, Thomas and Henry Blaney may be summoned to appear and answer the premises.

29 Oct. 22 Charles II. Answer of Henry Blayne, Esq., that he knows nothing of the said bond and denies that the said Edward Blayne, Esq., died seised of estate as aforesaid and no real estate descended to him as brother and heir, but he says John Blayne, Esq., decd., late grandfather of defendant, was seised of lands in co. Montgomery to the yearly value of £700, and on the marriage of the said deceased with Elizabeth his wife, one of the defendants, £400 was settled on Edward for life with contingent remainders to Elizabeth for life and to their issue, in default to issue of Edward, in default to right heirs of John, and he settled £40 a year on defendant's brother, Arthur Blayne, for life, and £20 to defendant's uncle, Andrew Blayne, and the residue about £80 to the said Edward. Afterwards Edward became much indebted to several persons, and principally in the sum of £200 to Richard Hopton, Esq., and many others. Does not know of what estate Edward died seised, but during his lifetime his goods were sold by the Sheriff to pay an execution taken upon them for debt (Bridges, 57/13).

My friend, Mr. W. Paley Baildon, F.S.A., of Lincoln's Inn, tells me that if the combined statements of the plaintiff and defendant in *Draper v. Blayne* are to be relied on, there is no room for a legitimate daughter of Edward Blayne. The plaintiff describes Henry B. as heir in tail, and Henry gives particulars of the entail, made by his grandfather, John B., on the marriage of Edward and Elizabeth. Omitting the two life estates, there was a remainder to the issue of Edward and Elizabeth. Then a remainder to the issue of Edward, i.e. by any other wife. Then to the right heirs of John, the settler.

Now Edward was clearly the eldest son of John's daughter and sole heir; and if Henry were heir of entail, as stated by the plaintiff and implied by Henry himself, it was as next surviving son of John's daughter. But Henry only comes in in default of issue of Edward, either by Elizabeth or any other wife. *Ergo*, Edward left no legitimate issue surviving.

* *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 281.

† See *ante*, pp. 12-13.

Lichfield as late as 1695. But he did not remain with him much longer. On 13 November 1696 he made a second matrimonial venture,* and from that date at least his life was spent in Birmingham, where he carried on a bookseller's business of his own. Of his first wife we do not know even the name, but his second wife, Sarah, came of a well-to-do yeoman family living at Elmdon, in Warwickshire,† where her father, Thomas Fisher, had died the year before the wedding, which took place at Harborne, near Birmingham. Sarah's sister, Martha Fisher, had married Thomas Bromhall, then a maltster in Lichfield,‡ at whose house in Tamworth Street Andrew Johnson had no doubt done his courting.§

* *Johnsonian Gleanings*, ante, I., 20.

† *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 217.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 226. To the particulars there given of Mrs. Andrew Johnson's nephew, Thomas Bromhall the younger, of Spring Lane, Baddiley, Cheshire, I can now add the following note, made in a copy of Richard Grafton's *Chronicles of England*, 1563 :—" March y^e 7, 1770. Dyed Thos. Broomhall, Esq., and was Bured at Baddeley y^e 12, and left y^e Bulk of his Fortune to Mrs. Mary Wilbraham, of Hough, In the Parish of Widwenbury, and doug. of the Rev^d and John Wilbraham : he was broder to Roger Wilbraham, late of Darford [Dorfeld] Esqr." The volume had belonged to Henry Cookson, of Burland, who bought it at a sale at Richard Betteley's, of Spring Lane, in the year 1724 (*Cheshire Sheaf*, II., 371).

§ In what I shall frequently refer to, for brevity, as " the Lichfield census of 1695," the name is wrongly given as Bromwell, thus :—" Tho: Bromwell, 38 ; Martha his wife, 27 ; Tho: y^r son, 2 ; Mary Clews, serv^t, 20." This " census " is Harleian MS. 7022, and is entitled " An Abstract of all the names of the Inhabitants of the Citty and County of Licheñ," but bears no date. In my *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 217, I referred to it, on Grazebrook's authority, and gave its date as approximately 1692. But I have now obtained a complete copy of this most valuable list, and it is clear from much internal evidence that it was made in 1695, and that therefore it was a return under the Act of Farliament of that year ordering an assessment upon marriages, births and burials, and upon bachelors and widowers, who are all distinguished in the list. Each bachelor has a shilling opposite his name, while a childless widower escapes with sixpence, and a widower with children is allowed to go free. What makes the list so very much more valuable is the fact that the relationship between the members of each household is given, and their ages " marked in plain figures." It would seem to have taken some weeks to compile. In Tamworth Street we find this household :—" Henry Battman, 32 ; Eliz. his wife, 26 ; W^m. son, 3 ; Eliz., Daught^r, 1 ; Sarah Smith, *Mortu* (20), 00-04-00 " ; and in Sadler Street another household which death had visited :—" Rob^t Webb, 52 ; Sarah his wife, 50 ; Rob^t y^r son *mortus* (21)." But we learn from St. Michael's register that " Sarah Smith in Tamworth Street " was buried 22 May 1695 ; and " Robert son of Robert Webb " not until 28 June 1695. The total of individuals enumerated is 2,864 ; unfortunately the Close, with the Cathedral dignitaries and other superior residents, is not included. It must have been from this list that Gregory King, in 1696, made his curious calculations

This uncle of the Doctor has some title to independent fame, in that his name appears on the title page of the first book known to have been printed in Birmingham—"by J. Downing, for Andrew Johnson, Bookseller in Birmingham, 1702." The book was but a small one and contained two sermons preached in 1701 by the Rev. Abraham Jeacocke, minister of Deritend Chapel, Birmingham.* We shall hear no more of Andrew Johnson for another eighteen years.†

In 1696 appeared a small octavo volume by Sir John Floyer, entitled *The Preternatural State of Animal Humours Described*, printed in London "by W. Downing, for Michael Johnson";‡ and in 1699 the same printer produced for him J. Bradley's *Impartial View of the Truth of Christianity, with Life and Miracles of Apollonius Tyanæus*.§ No doubt he was concerned in the publishing of many other books; but at this distance of time it is not easy to trace them. It must have been about 1697 when Michael Johnson began the manufacture of parchment, as I shall explain later.||

It has, I think, been tacitly assumed that Michael Johnson was the only bookseller of his day in Lichfield, and that, however numerous his troubles, competition at his own door was not one of them. This does not seem to have been the case, however, for William Bailey was a bookseller and stationer there from at least 1683 until his death in 1715, and his shop, moreover, was in Market Street, not far from Michael's.¶ The Doctor was a boy of only six when this worthy died, yet it appears that he remembered him; for, speaking to the Rev. Hugh Bailie about 1780, he remarked, "I knew your great-grandfather,"** who was this very William.

In the September of 1700 Michael Johnson was summoned to the

regarding the fecundity of married couples, as affected by disparity of age (see Harwood's *Lichfield*, p. 379).

* *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 218.

† See *post*, p. 108.

‡ *Notes and Queries*, 3rd S., IV., 459. This book was to be sold, not by Michael himself, but "by Robert Clavel, Sam. Smith, and Benjamin Walford, in St. Paul's Church Yard." Re Walford, see *post*, p. 98.

§ *Booksellers of the Time of Dr. Johnson*, E. Marston, 1902, p. 10. Mr. Bradley was Vicar of Alrewas (Rupert Simms's *Bibliotheca Staffordiensis*).

|| See *post*, p. 26.

¶ See *post*, IV., Appendix K.

** See *ante*, *Johnsonian Gleanings*, II., 78.

bedside of his dying relative, Dr. Gerard Skrymsher, who lived at the little hamlet of Woodseaves, in the parish of High Offley, near Eccleshall,* and quite twenty-five miles from Lichfield. Dr. Skrymsher was a very old man—he was born in 1618 †—and his weakness in his last illness was no doubt great, but four days before his death he was able to declare his wishes as to the disposal of his estate, before Michael Johnson and other witnesses. On the day after the aged physician's death, Michael, as the scholar and amateur lawyer ‡ of the party, wrote down the dead man's testamentary wishes, and witnessed the document with the others. A few months later, when administration of the estate was granted to Catherine Skrymsher, the widow, it was Michael Johnson, of Lichfield, stationer, who stood surety for the proper education of the children. It was Gerard's son, "Charles Scrimshaw, of Woodsease," concerning whom the Doctor made enquiries, only a fortnight before his own death in 1784, his interrogations being addressed to his friend the Rev. William Vyse, who was Vicar of High Offley from 1774 to 1799.§ Charles, he said, was "very nearly related" to himself;|| yet in spite of this the Doctor knew so little of him as to enquire after his welfare when he had been dead for two-and-twenty years, and when, if he had lived, he would have been

* *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 249-50, 256. In *Erdeswick's Survey of Staffordshire*, ed. Thos. Harwood, 1820, p. 141, I find a note :—"A fourth Skrymsher seat, Plot's map seems to fix, by its figures, to Hill House, close to Adbaston, in High Offley, where Gerard Skrymsher, M.D., an offset of the Norbury house, being youngest son of the above James, was living till 1700. His son Charles was of the same, Woodseaves, 1728." In "Staffordshire Pedigrees" (*Harleian Society*, vol. 63, p. 207), under "Skrimshire," we find "Gerard M.D. now living at Norbury 1680." "Gerard Scrimshaw, Esquire, and Mrs. Ann Marriett." were married at Whitchurch, Warwicks, 24 Aug. 1639 (*Warwickshire Parish Registers*, I., 77). Perhaps this was Gerard of Aqualate, cousin of Dr. Skrymsher (see *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 252). I have not traced where Dr. Skrymsher got his degree, but Sir Norman Moore, President of the Royal College of Physicians, suggests to me that he might have graduated at Padua, or Orleans.

† *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 255.

‡ See *post*, pp. 82, 92.

§ Rupert Simms's *Bibliotheca Staffordiensis*.

|| *Letters of Samuel Johnson*, ed. Birkbeck Hill, II., 430-1. At p. 259 of my *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, I said that Charles Skrymsher evidently had a married daughter, Mrs. Babb. Since then I have found her marriage at Sheinton, Shropshire.—"1746. Apl. 12. Henry Babb and Mrs. Katherine Skrymsher, lic." (*Parish Register Society*, vol. 28, p. 12). She would be Agnes Catherine Skrymsher, bapt. 1726 at High Offley.

a patriarch of ninety-six. Actual proof has yet to be found of the exact relationship between the Johnsons and the Skrymschers, but there seems no room for doubting what it was. A "very near relation" could hardly be more distant than a first cousin; perhaps it is even stretching the description so to apply it. Charles Skrymscher was certainly not an uncle of Dr. Johnson's, either on his father's or his mother's side; and certainly was not a cousin (either by blood or by marriage) on the Doctor's mother's side. It is impossible to explain his "near relationship" except on the supposition that he was a first cousin on the Johnson side—that Dr. Skrymscher's wife Catherine was a sister of Michael Johnson. And when we see that this supposition is supported by all the facts known to us—that Michael Johnson was summoned to the dying bedside of Dr. Skrymscher, that he drew up his will and afterwards stood surety for the proper administration of the estate and for the children's education; that the date was nearly half a dozen years before his marriage to Sarah Ford, whose family he very likely did not even know at the time; and that the name Catherine, while it never occurs in the Ford pedigree, was the name of Michael Johnson's mother—we are left without much room for doubt.*

Quite a new aspect is thus disclosed of Dr. Johnson's social connexions, and one which is well calculated to puzzle us, as conflicting so entirely with his own constant depreciation of his family. Speaking of his father, in his "Annals," he said:—"My mother had no value for his relations; those indeed whom we knew of were much lower than hers."† And in an allusion to his mother's cousin, Mrs. Harriotts, he remarked that his father "had none so high to whom he could send any of his family."‡

Gerard Skrymscher was the descendant of an old family that had been settled in Staffordshire for generations and had intermarried

* I have submitted this problem to two friends, lawyers as well as skilled genealogists, who can see no other explanation than that I give, and think that the evidence only stops short of legal proof. It may be pointed out that Johnson evidently thought of leaving Charles Skrymscher a legacy, if alive and in poor circumstances; and that this strongly supports the idea that he was a relative on the *father's* side: his mother's kin he ignored.

† *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, ed. Birkbeck Hill, I., 132.

‡ See *post*, p. 60.

with some of the best blood in the county.* He was the youngest son of James Skrymsher, of Norbury Manor, by Eleanor his wife, daughter of John Hockenhull, of Prenton, Cheshire.† Gerard's eldest brother, John,‡ who inherited Norbury, married Alice, daughter of Sir Francis Leigh, and sister of the Earl of Chichester, and had a son John, "Adjutant-General to Prince Rupert and Standard Bearer of the Pensioners to Charles II," who, by his wife Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Hervey Bagot, was father of Sir Charles Skrymsher.§ One of Gerard's first cousins was Sir Thomas Skrymsher, of Aqualate;|| and a first cousin on the mother's side was John Moore, whose signature ornaments the death-warrant of Charles I.¶ But of much greater interest is it that his sister, Catherine Skrymsher, who married John Elliot, was nurse to James II** and continued in the royal household for many years as a woman of the bed-chamber.†† James—Duke of

* *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 251 *et seq.*

† *Ibid.*, p. 253.

‡ "1592. Xmas. John Skrymishawe, s. of James, of Norbury, co. Stafford, Esq.; app. to William Towerson, 8 years" (Skinners' Company Apprenticeships, *Miscellanea Genealogica et Heraldica*, 3rd S., I., 248). This, perhaps, was an uncle of Gerard, whose brother John was born about 1600 (*Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 253). In Harwood's edition of *Erdeswick's Survey of Staffordshire*, 1820, pp. 427-8, is a note questioning if Gerard was really son of that James Skrymsher whose brother (born about 1541) was father of Sir Thomas Skrymsher. There is, at least, no doubt that Gerard was youngest son of James of Norbury Manor and of Eleanor his wife (*Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 251, 256). In 1709 Sir Charles Skrymsher bequeathed a farm called Tildsleys, in High Offley, to his "kinsman" Charles Skrymsher, son of his late uncle (*i.e.*, great-uncle) Gerard (*ibid.*, pp. 254, 258).

§ *Ibid.*, pp. 253-4.

|| *Ibid.*, p. 252.

¶ *Ibid.*, p. 256.

** See "The English Ladies of Pontoise," *Herald and Genealogist*, III., 411, where is given a list of all the religious of the choir at Pontoise, near Paris, including "M. Frances Elliot, daughter of John Elliot, of Bellos, in Essex, and Catherine, daughter of John Scrimshaw, esq. of Norbury, in Staffordshire (this lady was nurse to James II.); died 1698, aged 66." "M." stood for Mary, an additional name assumed in honour of the Blessed Virgin. In the Staffordshire Visitation of 1664 the youngest daughter of James Skrymsher and Eleanor Hockenhull is given as "Catherine, wife of John Elyot of Ridware, co. Staff." (*William Salt Society*, "Staffordshire Collections," vol. V., pt. 2, p. 268). In the Moore MSS., among letters of 1650-73, is one, undated, from "Katherine Eliott, a cousin of Edward Moore; she was nurse to the Duke of York" (*Hist. MSS. Commission*, 10th Report, Appendix 4, p. 104).

†† In a list of sums due, in 1662, to various officers and servants of the household of H.R.H. the Duke of York, occurs the following:—"Mrs. Katherine Elliot, one of ye women of the bed-chamber to her R. Higness ye Duches of Yorke, with a salary of 150^{li} per annum" (*Hist. MSS. Commission*, 8th Report, Appendix I., p. 278); and

York as he then was—retained his regard for Mrs. Elliot, and interested himself in a projected marriage between her granddaughter and Lord Abergavenny.* With such connexions as these could we be surprised if Michael Johnson

was a zealous high-churchman and royalist, and retained his attachment to the unfortunate house of Stuart, though he reconciled himself, by casuistical

on 22 Apl. 1672 a warrant was issued by James, Duke of York, for the continuance for life, of a pension of 250^{li} per annum, allowed to Mistress Elliot "in the lifetime of my deare wife the dutches deceased" (*ibid.*, p. 280). In the 1662 list she occurs a second time as "Mrs. Elliott, one of her R.H. the Duchess of York's women of the Bedchamber, with a salary of 52^{li} per annum" (*ibid.*, p. 279). In a list of the Duke's pensioners, dated Michaelmas 1682, appears the name of "Mrs. Katherine Elliott, £200 os. od." (*ibid.*, 15th Report, Appendix 2, p. 19).

* Writing to Lord Preston, from London, on 28 Sept. 1682, the Duke of York said that he "could not refuse my nurse Mrs. Elliot to recommend an affaire of her grand child who she tells me has been contracted to the Lord Abergavenny, whose mother it seems dos what she can to break it. I do not understand the affaire very well, and therfor all I have to desire of you is that you will countenance the yonge woman, as far as will consist with law and justice" (*Hist. MSS. Commission*, 7th Report, p. 262). Lord Preston replied from Paris on 18 Oct. :—"I shall not fail, sir, to take all possible care of that business which your Highness is pleased to recommend to me relating to Mrs. Fairfax, as I shall be of all the commands which you are pleased to lay upon me. I think she hath a great deal of justice on her side, and that it will be impossible for my Lord of Abergavenny to avoid the contract" (*ibid.*, p. 338). Mistress Fairfax, however, did not bring her lover to book, for George Nevill, 12th Lord Abergavenny [1666-95], married Honora, daughter of John, 1st Lord Belasyse (G.E.C.'s *Complete Peerage*).

On 11 Sept. 1688 a commission was issued to Dame Catherine Southcott *alias* Fairfax, widow, daughter of Catherine Eliot, late of par. of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, co. Middx., widow, decd., to administer the goods, etc., of said decd. (P.C.C. Admon. Act Book, f. 143). On 26 June 1690 admon. of goods of Catherine Elliott, late of St. James [*sic*]-in-the-Fields, decd., not administered by Dame Catherine Southcott, the daughter, was granted to Anne Besse, the principal creditor (*ibid.*, f. 90d). On 6 July 1691 admon. of the goods of Dame Catherine Southcott *alias* Fairfax, late of Tumby, co. Lincoln, widow, decd., was granted to George Jolland, the principal creditor, Dame Mary Anna Carterett and Anna Fairfax, daughters of decd., having first renounced (*ibid.*, f. 116).

Sir George Southcott, 1st bart. (created 1662), married Katherine, daur. and heir of John Elliott, of Essex, and left at his death in 1664 a son and successor, Sir George Southcott, who died unmard. before 1691, when the baronetcy expired (*Burke's Extinct Baronetries*). His widow Catherine became the second wife of Nicholas Fairfax, brother of William, 3rd Viscount Fairfax, and Charles, 5th Viscount; and (by his first wife) father of Charles, 7th Viscount, and grandfather of Charles, 6th Viscount. Nicholas and Catherine Fairfax had daughters Mary and Dorothy, baptized respectively 3rd Aug. 1666 and 1 June 1668 at Walton, in Yorkshire (Foster's *Yorkshire Pedigrees*, vol. I.); but, as has been seen, they certainly had one other daughter. And there was certainly a daughter Catherine born to Sir George Southcott and Catherine [Elliott]:

arguments of expediency and necessity, to take the oaths imposed by the prevailing power,*

if his own sister had married the brother of James the Second's nurse?

How are we to reconcile the Doctor's contemptuous references to his father's family with such connexions as these? Must we conclude that he knew nothing of them, and that, though he had a vague knowledge of the existence of his cousin Charles Skrymsher, he was quite unaware that Charles's sister, Hester Skrymsher, born in 1686, had in 1705 become the second wife of Thomas Boothby, of Tooley Park, Leicestershire, whose first wife, it may be mentioned, had been Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Charles Skrymsher? Thomas Boothby was a man of large estate and high social position, "one of the greatest sportsmen in England," whose celebrated pack of foxhounds, which he hunted for fifty-five years, is not forgotten even to-day.† It is astonishing if Dr. Johnson did not know this, especially when we consider his devoted friendship with Miss Hill Boothby, whose father was second cousin to Thomas.‡

Yet we can only conclude that Michael Johnson, for some reason, concealed these connexions from his family, and that, when his wife was rubbing it in to him how much superior socially her relatives were to his, a species of wounded pride restrained him from blowing all the wind out of her sails by telling her the true state of affairs. Gerard had evidently married beneath him in the social scale, which is not so surprising when we realize that, while he was born in 1618, his wife Catherine Johnson (as we are presuming her to have been) was not born till about 1651.§ When a man of about sixty-five marries a woman some thirty-three years his junior, he must, as a rule, be satisfied with her youthfulness and not expect her to have a pedigree equal to his own. Perhaps Michael found that the younger members of the Skrymsher family cold-shouldered him as they grew up, and so, being a proud and sensitive man, easy to take offence, decided to give himself no opportunity of being snubbed by them.

she was licensed 2 Oct. 1675, then aged about 21, to marry James Palmer at St. Martin-in-the-Fields (Foster's *London Marriage Licences*, par. 1010).

* Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 36-7.

† *Reades of Blackwood Hill* and *Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 262-3.

‡ *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

§ *Ibid.*, p. 257.

A note by Booth, the antiquary, in 1671, asserts that the Skrymshers of Norbury were then "all whore mongers as it is sayd,"* but this is a little harsh, and a white marble mural tablet at High Offley, the principal one in the church, avers that Gerard was "a man of Honour, Probity and Piety"†—and such monuments never lie. In his will, already mentioned as having been written out by Michael Johnson,‡ he leaves his house and property to his wife for her life, "not doubting but she will be a carefull mother of my children."§

We can find other curious connexions between Dr. Johnson and the Skrymsker stock which are quite independent of the original connexion through Michael Johnson, belonging as they do to the Doctor's later life. For instance, a granddaughter of Thomas Boothby's first marriage, Anne Boothby Skrymsker (her father|| took his mother's name), was married in 1758 to Hugo Meynell of Bradley, the celebrated sportsman,¶ a brother of Mrs. Fitzherbert—according to Dr. Johnson gifted with "the best understanding he ever met with in any human being"—over whose household, during his widowhood, Miss Hill Boothby presided for some years.** To Hugo Meynell's father, at Bradley, Johnson made frequent visits from Ashburne, about 1740,

where his company was much desired by the ladies of the family, who were, perhaps, in point of elegance and accomplishments, inferior to few of those with whom he was afterwards acquainted.††

At least it cannot be questioned that Hugo Meynell, with whose family Johnson was so intimate and through whose sister he gained the acquaintance of Hill Boothby, married the daughter of a man whose stepmother must have been, equally with her brother Charles Skrymsker of Woodseaves, "very nearly related" to the Doctor. We may well be puzzled by the whole problem.

* *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 257.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 255-6.

‡ See *ante*, p. 20.

§ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 256.

|| In *Parish Register Society*, vol. 16, p. 109, I find his marriage entry at Stratford-on-Avon:—"1720/1. Jany. 19. Thomas Boothby Skrymsker, Esq., to Mrs. Anne Clopton, by licence."

¶ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 264.

** *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 262; *Piozzi's Anecdotes of the late Samuel Johnson*, 2nd ed., 1786, p. 160.

†† *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 262.

A great-grandson of Thomas Boothby's first marriage, Sir Corbet Corbet, married Hester Cotton, a first cousin of Mrs. Piozzi.* A well-known writer has stated that Johnson was buried in Westminster Abbey,

contrary to his desire that he might rest at Adderley in Shropshire, which belonged to his friend Lady Corbet, cousin of Mrs. Thrale.†

This does not quite accord with Hawkins's account of his conversation with Johnson, a few days before his death, in which the Doctor raised no objection to the suggestion of burial in the Abbey.‡

Yet again, Charles Skrymsher Boothby, of Foston, Leicestershire, nephew to Johnson's "very near relative," left a widow, who when she made a codicil to her will on 23 October 1784, two months before Johnson's death, did it in the presence of Holled Smith, his beloved Tetty's great-nephew,§ whose grandson Thomas Noel, by the way, wrote "Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep."||

But to return to Michael Johnson himself. As already indicated,¶ he seems to have begun the manufacture of vellum and parchment about 1697, according to his own statement in 1718. In his quest for hides and skins he dealt with people in places as far away as Ireland and Scotland, as well as the most remote parts of England.** Whether he personally travelled so far afield we do not actually know, but it

* *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 265. Sir Corbet, son of Thomas Davenant, assumed his mother's name of Corbet.

† A. J. C. Hare's *Walks in London*, 1878, vol. II., p. 249. Hare's mother, Maria Leycester (born 22 Nov. 1798), daughter of Oswald Leycester, in her childhood used to accompany her parents on visits to Sir Corbet Corbet (an old college friend of her father's), and Lady Corbet, at Adderley (A. J. C. Hare's *Memorials of a Quiet Life*, 1872, vol. I., pp. 7, 9). The tale of Johnson's wishing to be buried at Adderley no doubt was told by the Corbets to the Hares. There is no question as to Johnson having known the Corbets well (see *Letters of Samuel Johnson*, ed. Birkbeck Hill, I., 333; II., 350, 393-4; Hayward's *Autobiography of Mrs. Piozzi*, 2nd ed., 1861, vol. I., pp. 130, 219, 348; II., 23; A. M. Broadley's *Dr. Johnson and Mrs. Thrale*, 1910, pp. 178, 180). It is curious to realize that Sir Corbet Corbet, through the families of Boothby and Davenant, was great-great-great-great-grandson of John Skrymsher, brother of Johnson's [? uncle], Dr. Gerard Skrymsher.

‡ Hawkins's *Life of Johnson*, 1787, p. 587.

§ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 265.

|| *Ibid.*, p. 236.

¶ See *ante*, p. 19.

** *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 213, 216.

seems probable that in a business requiring so much knowledge and care as the purchase of skins it would be dangerous to trust to any but very honest and skilled subordinates. It is worthy of remembrance that Dr. Johnson had Martin Martin's *Western Islands of Scotland*, published in 1703, put into his hands when very young by his father, who specially directed his attention to the passage in which the visitor from St. Kilda assumed that the high church of Glasgow was cut out of the solid rock. Possibly Michael's interest in the passage arose from his having seen the high church himself. It is curious to reflect that he may have preceded his son in these remote parts. Martin's account of the Hebrides excited in the boy's mind a curiosity as to those islands not gratified until the time of the celebrated "Journey" with Boswell.*

The best skins Michael kept for the purpose of his own manufacture: those rejected as unfit for vellum or parchment he put out to be tanned, for he admitted to knowing nothing of tanning himself, even had the law permitted him to practise a trade to which he had not been apprenticed.† He first employed to tan these inferior skins a Mr. Chaplain‡ and one Thomas Rutter, a tanner in Lichfield,§ and the resultant leather he sold himself.|| Thomas Rutter died about the end of 1702,¶ and according to Michael, when he

Lay on His death Bead He requested His friends that came to take their last leave of Him to speake to me to continew my business with his wife and sone.**

His children were all young at this time; but the connexion was maintained with his widow and afterwards with his son John, who "had for several years his sole dependance" on Michael Johnson.†† This

* Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 450.

† *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 213-15.

‡ There were two Chaplain households in Lichfield at the time of the "census" of 1695 (see *ante*, p. 18). One was in Market Street:—"Tho: Chaplane, Batchelor, 29 years; Rich^d Broom, Batchelor, 30 years; Mary Chaplaine, Spinst^r, 35; Tho: Chaplaine, Sojourn^r, 10." The other was in Lombard Street:—"Fra: Chaplaine, 38; Sarah his wife, 33; Fra: his son, 4; Eliz., 8, Sarah, 5, Ann, 2, Daught^{rs}; Ann Chaplaine, Widd., 70."

§ The Rutters were living in Stow Street in 1695:—"Tho: Rutter, 44; Mary his wife, 36; John, 10, Tho:, 6, Mary, 12, Ann, 9, Children."

|| *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 213-15.

¶ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

** *Ibid.*, p. 213.

†† *Ibid.*, pp. 213-15.

suggests that the parchment manufactory was on a fairly large scale, if one man could derive a living from tanning the rejected skins at so much the dozen. John Rutter seems to have served Michael well for a number of years, but the business was eventually taken out of his hands, as we shall see later on.*

We know nothing further of Michael Johnson's career until his marriage in 1706 to Sarah Ford, whose origin and early life are dealt with in the next chapter.

* See *post*, p. 92.

CHAPTER II

HIS MOTHER, SARAH FORD, AND HER MARRIAGE TO
MICHAEL JOHNSON

"The ancient family of Ford"—Johnson's biographers on its position—His great-grandfather, Henry Ford, the Birmingham yeoman and miller—Henry Ford's widow settles at Kings Norton: her charitable bequests—Their five children—The Barnesleys of Trysull—Johnson's great-uncle, Henry Ford, the Birmingham attorney—Henry Ford's chambers at Clifford's Inn, and his stewardship of the Whorwood estates—"The Manwoods," his house at Handsworth—A busy professional man, who latterly "abides at Oxford"—Johnson's grandfather, Cornelius Ford, and his early married life at Kings Norton—This grandfather's guardian, John Smalbroke—"Haunch Hall," Kings Norton—Popular education at that time—Cornelius Ford moves to Curdworth—Dunton manor house, his home for many years—A family of seven children—Johnson's uncles and aunts—Death of Mrs. Barnesley, sister to Cornelius—Sarah Ford left in sole charge at home—Her first meeting with Michael Johnson—The settlement on their marriage: financial provisions—The trustees under the settlement—Marriage at Packwood, where Cornelius had removed from Curdworth—Johnson's uncle, Samuel Ford—Mrs. Samuel Ford's clerical kinsmen—Her stepfather a Derbyshire justice—Johnson's uncle a Lincolnshire churchwarden—Johnson's unrecorded cousin, Samuel Ford, the Herefordshire parson—"Light Farm," Packwood, and its Johnsonian associations—Cornelius Ford a man of substance—Michael Johnson buys the famous corner house at Lichfield, and rebuilds it in its present form—Michael's long delay in carrying out the provisions of the marriage settlement—Death of old Cornelius Ford: his testamentary bequests—The evangelical works bequeathed to his family—A "Latin Bible" and a "Dictionary"—A very superior yeoman.

WHEN Dr. Johnson composed the epitaph to the memory of his parents, he described his mother as "of the ancient family of Ford."* And when his cousin Cornelius Ford, over half a century before, also

* *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 177.

honoured his father's memory with an epitaph, he recorded that he was "sprung from an ancient stock."* It is evident, therefore, that the Fords had some "pride of birth."

Boswell recorded that Mrs. Johnson was "descended of an ancient race of substantial yeomanry in Warwickshire."† Dr. Brocklesby, after a conversation with Johnson in 1783, noted that his mother was "the daughter of a little Warwickshire Gent."‡ Mrs. Piozzi, more explicit, says that :

Mr. Johnson's mother was daughter to a gentleman in the country, such as there were many of in those days, who possessing, perhaps, one or two hundred pounds a year in land, lived on the profits, and sought not to increase their income.

Mrs. Piozzi adds that : "she was therefore inclined to think higher of herself than of her husband."§ And Johnson himself, in his "Annals," confesses that his "mother had no value for his relations ; those indeed whom we knew of were much lower than hers."||

There is not much to quarrel with in these various references to Mrs. Johnson's origin. No actual evidence can be offered of her family being "ancient," though presumably we can all claim to belong to "ancient" families. But there is ample proof that the Fords were people of considerable respectability, enjoying a natural status in society much higher than did the Johnsons. Her grandfather, Henry Ford, was a yeoman farmer and miller, a man of some substance and standing. His early married life, from at least 1620, was spent at Aston-juxta-Birmingham,¶ where all his children were baptized, but somewhere about 1635 he moved into the parish of West Bromwich, where he purchased property and evidently carried on his business of milling.

* *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 167.

† Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 34-5.

‡ *Letters of Samuel Johnson*, ed. Birkbeck Hill, II., 437.

§ Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 154.

|| *Ibid.*, I., 132.

¶ I feel little doubt now that he was Henry Ford of Ward End, whose son Henry was baptized at Aston in 1607, and that this son was the Henry Ford, of Birmingham, admon. of whose estate was granted in 1661 to Henry Ford, the brother of decd. (*Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 198). If this were so, the elder brother Henry was probably the child of an earlier marriage.

By 1643 he is described as of Birmingham,* and before 1648 he died there, for in that year administration of his estate was granted to Mary his widow,† who shortly afterwards went to live at Kings Norton, in Worcestershire. Her son, Henry Ford, in April 1649, acting as attorney for her and his brother Cornelius, paid the substantial sum of £750 to John Serjeant, a yeoman in Kings Norton, for an estate there known as Haunch Hall,‡ which, it is interesting to note, was in 1731 mortgaged by his celebrated great-grandson, "Parson Ford," for the sum of £600, its value being then stated at £1,400.§ The estate was bought especially for the use of Cornelius, then just turned seventeen, and litigation ensued as to certain reservations which the vendor had desired to make in favour of one Clement Blythe, who rented some rooms in the house.|| There can be little doubt that Mrs. Ford came to live at Haunch Hall with young Cornelius, for at the time of her death, in July 1658, she was resident at Kings Norton; and she was buried there. Her will, made very few days before her death, indicates a woman of some substance and shows Dr. Johnson's great-grandmother to have had a charitable disposition. To her two sons she bequeaths all her leases on condition that they immediately distribute three pounds among the poor of Kings Norton, Birmingham, West Bromwich and Trysull; that they each give ten shillings yearly for life to the poor of the parish where they inhabit; and that they shall pay ten shillings yearly to each of their sisters for a similar purpose.¶

Henry and Mary Ford had five children:—Henry, an attorney, of whom we shall hear presently; Cornelius, the grandfather of Dr. Johnson; and three daughters, Mary, Elizabeth and Sarah, the last-named of whom died a spinster in 1654, aged thirty, at Winson Green,

* In 1641, as Henry Forde of West Bromwich, he took the oath at "The Protestation" of 1641 (Returns at House of Lords library; *inf.* Rev. F. A. Homer). An Act of Parliament in 1641 enacted that every male in England over eighteen years of age should subscribe to the "Oath of Protestation," which was directed against Popery (see *Leicestershire Parish Registers*, ed. Phillimore and Blegg, V., 143-4).

† *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 127.

‡ See *post*, IV., Appendix B.

§ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 161-2, 275.

|| See *post*, IV., Appendix B.

¶ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 127, 189.

Birmingham.* Mary Ford married George Jesson, a well-to-do yeoman of West Bromwich, in 1643, and mothered a plentiful and wide-spreading race,† well represented to-day; her second son, Henry Jesson, entered Pembroke College, Oxford, in 1667, sixty-one years before his famous kinsman.‡ Elizabeth Ford married twice. Of her first husband, a Tomkis, we know nothing; but her second husband, William Barnesley of Trysull, whom she married in 1657, was head of an old family of Staffordshire gentry. He was a man of some scientific inclinations, and when Robert Plot visited Trysull about 1675 the celebrated naturalist much appreciated the assistance of the "good old gentleman" in "riding about and shewing me the country (notwithstanding his age)" and pointing out various wonders of the heavens and the earth.§ In the Manor House, where he lived, he had his study, with books and desks.||

Henry Ford, the attorney, great-uncle of Dr. Johnson, is a figure of some interest. Born in 1628, he lived in his early life on a property at Winson Green, Birmingham, probably inherited from his father, and as a freeholder was often at that time styled "yeoman" in legal documents. In 1661 he took to wife Rebecca, daughter of William Ingram, a substantial yeoman or "gentleman" living at Nuthurst, in the parish of Hampton-in-Arden.¶ In 1665 Ford was admitted a Fellow of Clifford's Inn, being exonerated from attendance at lectures and other "exercises of learning," for the reason, no doubt, that his legal education was already completed.** Everything points to his having been a man of considerable activity in his profession. Though he retained his room at Clifford's Inn—a "single Chamber or Garrett three payre of Stayres high in the newe brick building"††—he continued to live at Birmingham, where no doubt he had his principal office. From about 1672 he acted as agent for the Staffordshire estates of Brome Whorwood, of Sandwell Park, West Bromwich, and of Holton

* *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 127, 197-8.

† Concerning some of whom, see *post*, pp. 63, 162, 178.

‡ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 135.

§ *Natural History of Staffordshire*, by Robert Plot, LL.D., pp. 6, 124-5.

|| *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 142.

¶ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

** *Ibid.*, pp. 129-30.

†† *Ibid.*, p. 130.

Park, near Oxford, whose wife made such strenuous endeavours to effect the escape of Charles I from Carisbrooke Castle. Brome Whorwood represented the city of Oxford in Parliament from 1661 to 1681, until he became a violent Whig.*

In 1681 Henry Ford mortgaged his Winson Green estate to Fulke Greville, 5th Lord Brooke, for £800. In 1683 the mortgage was transferred to William Walker, of Oxford, afterwards Sir William Walker, and next month the estate was sold by Henry Ford for £1,353 to the Rev. John Willes, D.D., son-in-law of Sir William, and father of two famous sons, a bishop and a chief justice.† In 1684 Dr. Willes was still owing £100 to Henry Ford, who arranged with Brome Whorwood to borrow an equal amount from him out of the Staffordshire rents, to be repaid when Dr. Willes settled up. This transaction led to litigation; indeed, Henry Ford figures as complainant in a considerable number of lawsuits.‡

About the time when he sold his Winson Green estate, Henry Ford built himself a new house called "The Manwoods" at Handsworth, on the very edge of West Bromwich parish and quite close to Brome Whorwood's seat of Sandwell Park. A three-storeyed, red-brick building, cruciform in plan, with steep gables and a central chimney into which are gathered all the flues of the house, "The Manwoods" still stands pretty much in its original form, though its present surroundings are hardly as they were in Ford's day.§ But it is a farmhouse now, and carries with it more land than the fifty acres that were originally attached to it.

During the latter part of his life, Henry Ford is always described as of Clifford's Inn, London, gentleman||—his professional description—although his actual residence was in Staffordshire. That he was in London fairly often is suggested by the fact that in 1684 one George Scott, a grocer in the parish of St. Botolph's, Aldgate, alludes to meeting him casually, as though it were quite among the chances of

* *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 131-2; and see *post*, IV., Appendix B.

† *Ibid.*, p. 129; and see *post*, p. 123.

‡ See *post*, IV., Appendix B.

§ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 131, and *Johnsonian Gleanings*, ante, I., 6, where views of "The Manwoods" are given.

|| See *post*, IV., Appendix B.

the day.* In 1686 he is further described as an attorney-at-law in the Court of Common Pleas.†

In February 1690/1, when he was a man of sixty-three, he relinquished his rooms at Clifford's Inn to Thomas Murcott.‡ This does not seem to have implied a slackening in his professional zeal, for in the following May "his occasions," he stated, "constrained him to abide more in London and Oxford than at home," so that certain residents of Kings Norton—including his own brother Cornelius—who were charged with enclosing parts of the common there, found that "they could not discourse with him as often as they wanted to," and transferred their cause to another lawyer. Or so he said when he asked for them to be subpœnaed.§ In the suit relating to this case he is described as an "attorney and solicitor in all the Courts at Westminster."||

Henry Ford's career, so far as it has been traced, ends here.¶ The fact that he was spending so much time at Oxford suggests that he was still acting professionally for the Whorwoods of Holton Park, or their representatives. It would be very interesting if we could connect the old attorney more particularly with the University city with which his great-nephew's fame is so affectionately associated.

And now we come to Cornelius Ford, grandfather of Dr. Johnson

* See *post*, IV., Appendix B.

† *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

‡ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 130.

§ See *post*, IV., Appendix B.

|| Prior to the Judicature Act of 1877 an attorney and a solicitor were not the same thing. Attorneys were those who practised in the Common Law courts, while solicitors acted only in Equity courts. Many, like Ford, were both, hence the reference to "all the Courts at Westminster."

¶ One would gather from the will of his sister, Mrs. Barnesley, in 1697, that he was then dead, as she leaves £5 to his daughter but does not mention him (*Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 189-90). This daughter Elizabeth, his only surviving child, married William Abnet of Handsworth, on 13 July 1681, at West Bromwich. I gave this marriage, on the parish clerk's authority, with the bridegroom's name as "Mr. William Flint" (*ibid.*, p. 204), but the Rev. F. A. Homer tells me that it is "Mr. William Abnet." In the Abnet pedigree in "Staffordshire Pedigrees" (*Harleian Society*, vol. 63, p. 1), it is stated that Thomas [it should be William] Abnet, married "— dr. and hr. of Henry Ford of Sandwell com. Staff." I cannot find any will or administration for Henry Ford, in P.C.C., at Lichfield, or among the Oxford University wills. And there are no wills at the Oxford Probate Registry for dates before 1801. Perhaps as he was a widower, with only one child, he settled all his property on her so that it passed to her at his death without further legal formalities.

and younger brother to the attorney. Baptized at Aston-juxta-Birmingham on 29 April 1632,* we hear nothing of him until 1649, when, as we have already seen,† the sum of £750 was expended in the purchase of the estate of Haunch Hall, Kings Norton, for his mother and himself, the idea clearly being that, when he grew up, it should serve as his share of the paternal inheritance. He evidently came to live at Haunch Hall with his mother. In 1651, while he was still a minor, we find his guardian, John Smalbroke, gentleman, acting for him.‡ There does not seem to have been any relationship between him and John Smalbroke, who belonged to a well-known Birmingham family, which afterwards produced Richard Smalbroke, Bishop of Lichfield from 1731 to his death in 1749,§ with whose family Dr. Johnson was on terms of friendship. It was John's grandfather, Thomas Smalbroke, a mercer in Birmingham—direct ancestor, too, of the Bishop||—who, in or about 1607, was libelled by his wife's kinsman, one of the Colmores, in some verses which ended thus:—

Read now my frindes who this catchpoole should be,
The steward of the towne in plaine tearmes tys hee,
Smalebrooke by name, a Brooke that yeldes no fish,
But frogs and toads, and that's no deynty dishe.

The lot of poets is ever unfortunate, and poor Mr. Colmore's spirited effort won him only the pillory and a fine.¶

When Cornelius Ford's mother died, in 1658, she left him all her household goods, her corn, hay, sheep, cattle, husbandry tools and

* *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 198.

† See *ante*, p. 31.

‡ See *post*, IV., Appendix B.

§ See *Dict. Nat. Biog.*

|| I have worked out a very full pedigree of the Smalbrokes, *circa* 1550-1800, in the hope of finding some Johnsonian connexion. John Smalbroke [1619-53] lived some years in Birmingham, but retired to Wolvey, in Warwickshire. His father, Richard Smalbroke [1571-1638], was eldest son of Thomas Smalbroke [d. 1609], whose second son Thomas Smalbroke [1585-1650] had a son Richard Smalbroke [1611-68], whose son Samuel Smalbroke [1640-1701], was father of Richard Smalbroke [1672-1749], Bishop of Lichfield. The Bishop's second daughter, Catherine Smalbroke, married in 1733 the Rev. William Vyse [1709-70], whom I have identified with Johnson's fellow-collegian at Pembroke who offered him the decent pair of shoes (see *Times Literary Supplement*, 10 Feb. 1921, p. 92).

¶ *Hist. MSS. Commission*, 11th Report, Appendix 7, p. 161.

other implements, but not her "last yeare's wooll" or "the two heiffers that I last bought."* He married not later than 1661, but as yet we only know of his wife that her Christian name was Anne.† In December of that year, as of Kings Norton, yeoman, he became a trustee under the settlement on the marriage of his brother Henry to Rebecca Ingram,‡ and four months later his own eldest child was baptized.§ In February 1668/9 he is still described as of Kings Norton, yeoman.|| Two months later, on 6 April 1669, his third and youngest daughter, Sarah, the mother of Dr. Johnson, was baptized at Kings Norton.¶ Dr. Johnson, on a page of his "Prayers and Meditations," made a note that "if my mother had lived till March, she would have been eighty-nine,"** so that her baptism was not long delayed.

It is reasonable to suppose that Cornelius would live on at Haunch Hall when he married, and that Dr. Johnson's mother would be born there.†† Haunch Hall still exists at Kings

* *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 189.

† See *post*, p. 39.

‡ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 204; and *ante*, p. 32.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

|| See *post*, IV., Appendix B. And among the Warwickshire MSS. in the Birmingham Reference Library is one (252018), dated 25 Nov. 1669, by which certain property at Solihull is conveyed by way of mortgage from Thomas Lea to Cornelius Ford. The following is an abstract:—"25 Nov. 1669. Indenture between Thomas Lea, of Solihull, co. War., yeoman, of the 1st part, and Cornelius Ford, of Kingsnorton, co. Worc., gent., of the other part. In consideration of sum of £100, the said Thomas Lea grants to said Cornelius Ford two crofts of land, now or heretofore called Pepwall's croft and Smalbrooke's croft, containing 8 acres, lying in Solihull between land now or late of Thomas Sheldon, gent., and the lane called Lowbrookes Lane. And also another croft called Overfield, containing 7 acres, in Solihull, lying between land now or late of Thomas, lord Culpepper, land of Joshua Palmer, and other land of said Thomas Lea. To have and to hold, etc., for ever. Redeemable upon re-payment of said sum of £100 on or before 27 Nov. 1670 [Seal and signatures torn off]. Wits., Hen: Ford, Rowland Greenhall, Hum: Powell. *Endorsement*, dated 10 Dec. 1677: Received then and before this time from the within-named Thomas Lea the sum of £100, and the due interest thereof, and I do hereby acquit, etc., etc. (signed) Corn: Ford. Wits., Francis Collins, Fowke Lea his marke" (*inf.* W. B. Bickley).

¶ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 199.

** Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 24 footnote. Clearly she would have been ninety, not eighty-nine, as she was buried 23 Jan. 1759 (*Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 200).

†† Yet in a Kings Norton rent roll of 1666 the name of Cornelius Ford is down under Lea Yield (*Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 132), whereas "The Haunch," in recent years at any rate, has been rated under Moseley Yield (*inf.* W. B. Bickley).

Norton. Now known as "The Haunch," it is a substantial house that has been almost entirely modernized, if not altogether rebuilt, though the farm buildings are said to be old.* Nathaniel Ford, the youngest child of Cornelius, was baptized at Kings Norton in 1676.†

Dr. Johnson apparently told Dr. Brocklesby, in regard to his mother, that "the oldest people in her childhood had seldom learnt to read."‡ If this were true, the Fords must have been quite the exception, for they all seem to have been good writers and people of some education. There was probably not much intellectual society at Kings Norton, but the parish had received some educational stimulus from its vicar, Thomas Hall, uncle to John Hall, Bishop of Bristol.§ Thomas Hall, whom Calamy describes as

a very hard student, a considerable scholar, a well-furnished divine, a man of public spirit, and intent upon spreading knowledge, . . . prevailed with his parish to build a public library, and gave his own study to it in his lifetime.||

Ejected from the living of Kings Norton in 1662, he was a considerable author, and his books were evidently quite to the liking of old Cornelius Ford, who treasured his collection of them to his dying day.¶ Thomas Hall died soon after Cornelius Ford's marriage and four years before the birth of Johnson's mother,** so that any friendship with him can only have been an incident of Cornelius's early manhood.

In 1685 Cornelius was still described as of Kings Norton, yeoman,†† and in 1691 his name occurs in a list of those presented in the Pipe Office for enclosing parts of the common there.‡‡ But in 1694, when he purchased some property at Walsall—a close called the

* See an article by C. S. Sargisson in *The Bookman* for Sept. 1909, inspired by my researches, with which is given an excellent view of "The Haunch."

† *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 199.

‡ *Letters of Samuel Johnson*, ed. Birkbeck Hill, II., 437.

§ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 134.

|| *Nonconformists' Memorial*, by Edmund Calamy, ed. Samuel Palmer, 1775, II., 545.

¶ See *post*, p. 50.

** *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 134; and *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, under Thomas Hall.

†† See *post*, IV., Appendix B.

‡‡ *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

Lee, and Grey Goose Meadow—from one William Smallwood, he was of Dunton, in the parish of Curdworth, Warwickshire, gentleman.* And there is evidence of his having settled at Dunton at least as early as 1688, and of his actual residence having been a quite important place called Dunton House—the manor house—now apparently represented by a fine eighteenth century farmhouse known as Dunton Hall.† Dunton is only a small hamlet, less than a mile from Curdworth Church, and some thirteen miles from Kings Norton: what took Cornelius Ford there we do not know.

Joseph Ford, the eldest son of Cornelius, married about the end of 1690, and soon became well established as a physician at Stourbridge.‡ The three younger sons, Samuel, Cornelius and Nathaniel, were at this time probably beginning to go their own ways in the world, though Nathaniel, a boy of only fourteen, may not yet have begun his apprenticeship to the clothier's business.§ The three daughters, Phœbe, aged twenty-five, Mary, aged twenty-three, and Sarah, aged twenty-one, were all as yet unmarried and evidently living at home. The first to go was quite rightly Phœbe, the eldest, who in 1698|| married John Harrison, a saddler in

* *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 207-8.

† The Rev. Lancelot Mitchell, Rector of Curdworth, incited by my inquiries, obtained leave from Lord Leigh's agent to inspect the abstract of title of the Dunton property, purchased by that nobleman's predecessor on 26 Nov. 1688, when it was described as "all that the manor or lordship or reputed manor or lordship of Dunton situate, lying or being in Dunton, Curdworth, Lea Marston and Moxhull or some or one of them, in the said county of Warwick, with its rights members and appurtenances, and also that capital messuage or manor house with the appurtenances in Dunton aforesaid called or known by the name of Dunton House, and then or late in the tenure or occupation of Cornelius Ford his assigns or assignees, and also those three other messuages or tenements . . . in the occupation of John Cox, Thomas Blunt and Humphrey Pearson."

Mr. Mitchell tells me that Dunton now consists of three farms:—(1) Dunton Hall, an 18th century farmhouse, as mentioned above, once a place of some distinction, where the Rugeleys lived in the 17th century; (2) Mullensgrove, where the Willdays lived; and (3) Dunton House, an old farmhouse with a comparatively modern front. Mr. Mitchell feels quite certain that the Dunton House where Cornelius Ford lived is not the present Dunton House, but Dunton Hall. In the abstract of title, which carries back to 44 Eliz., the manor house is never called the "Hall," and Mr. Mitchell thinks that one of the other messuages unnamed has become the present Dunton House.

‡ See *post*, pp. 140-1.

§ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 154-6; and see *post*, pp. 105-6.

|| On the authority of General Plantagenet-Harrison's pedigree, I gave the date

Lichfield,* thus establishing the first connexion between Johnson's mother's family and the ancient city with which his fame will ever be associated.

In September 1697 died Cornelius Ford's only surviving sister, Mrs. Barnesley, who had been a widow since 1685, when her husband, true to his character of a "good old gentleman," † bequeathed to his "welbeloved wife," with more valuable properties, his "best bed and bedding." ‡ In the beginning of 1697 Cornelius had gone over to Trysull, beyond Wolverhampton, where his sister lived at the Manor House and was quite the great lady of the parish, to witness her will, the signature to which, despite the fact that she was "sick and weak in body" and seventy-five years of age, is wonderfully firm and well formed and indicates that she was a woman of considerable education. § She left the ample sum of fifty pounds for her funeral expenses, as well as five pounds each for mourning to—amongst others—Cornelius and his wife. To Cornelius's seven children she left five pounds apiece, and to his three daughters—including Dr. Johnson's mother—"one pair of Flaxen sheets" each. || The very detailed and interesting inventory of her goods and chattels shows the Manor House to have been well furnished for the period. ¶

In 1701 Cornelius Ford lost his wife,** his companion for forty

of the marriage as 16 May 1697 (*Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 178), but the Rev. Lancelot Mitchell has kindly sent me the following entry in the register of Curdworth:—"1698. John Harrison, Sadler, of the City of Litchfield, and Mrs. Phebe Ford of this parish, married May 16th." The General did not state the place of marriage: perhaps he got the date from a Family Bible, and did not know it. Mr. Mitchell made a much more successful search than did a previous rector, and found two more valuable entries that had been missed (see below, and *post*, p. 40).

Among the Kings Norton manorial documents is "An extract of the fines, issues, and amercements found lost and accruing to the most Excellent Princes Katherine Queene dowager of England," etc., etc., 1697, in which occurs:—"For Incloseing Plecks forth of the West, Leay Yeald, Cornelius Ford, gent., os. 6d." (*inf.* W. B. Bickley).

* See above. The Lichfield census of 1695 (see *ante*, p. 18) shows only one suitable John Harrison, a householder in Bird Street:—"John Harrison, Batchelor, 25; Mary Harrison, Spinstr., 28; Edwd. Shakespeare, servt., 20."

† See *ante*, p. 32.

‡ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 189.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

|| *Ibid.*, pp. 189-90.

¶ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

** Extract from Curdworth register, kindly communicated by Mr. Mitchell:—"1701. Anne wife of Cornelius Ford of Dunton, yeoman, was buried Octob. ye 28th."

years. And early in 1703 his second daughter, Mary, made a marriage which took her even further from him than Lichfield, where Mrs. Harrison had made her home. Her husband, John Hardwicke, of Great Moor, in the parish of Pattingham, five miles west of Wolverhampton, came of a family of small gentry, long settled at Great Moor, who claimed descent from the ancient Hardwickses of Hardwicke, and who certainly had acquired some good blood through their marriages.* A rather curious circumstance was that, while Mary Ford was thirty-five, her bridegroom was full ten years her junior.

Sarah Ford, with her mother dead, and her two sisters married, was now left at home in sole charge of her father. But her residence, as well as her condition, was soon to change. Old Cornelius left Curdworth, and made another move of thirteen miles, due south, to Packwood, in Warwickshire,† a parish immediately adjoining Nuthurst, where lived the Ingram family, from which his brother Henry Ford had taken a wife over forty years before.‡ And it was from Packwood, in 1706, that Sarah Ford married Michael Johnson.

It has been conjectured that Michael and Sarah first became acquainted at Birmingham,§ where, according to Boswell, "old Mr. Johnson used to open a shop every market-day."|| But Sarah had always lived at least half a dozen miles out of Birmingham, in the country, and it is much more probable that their friendship arose through her sister Mrs. Harrison, who had been settled in

* In *The Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*. pp. 185-7, I gave much information of John and Mary Hardwicke, of Pattingham, with strong reasons for identifying them with John Hardwicke and Mary Ford, although I had no conclusive evidence. The Hardwickses have devoted considerable attention to their pedigree (see the latest and most scientific version of the early portion in Howard and Crisp's *Visitation of England and Wales*, "Notes," vol. 5, p. 145), but have never been able to give the maiden name of John Hardwicke's wife Mary; while I had no direct evidence that Mary Ford's husband, John Hardwicke, was he of Pattingham. But the following extract from the Curdworth register, kindly furnished by Mr. Mitchell, has placed the matter beyond dispute:—"1702. John Hardwick of Pattingham in y^e county of Stafford, yeoman, and Mary Ford of this Parish, marr. Feb. 17th." According to Howard and Crisp's pedigree, John Hardwicke was admitted tenant of the manor of Pattingham on 3 June 1703, three and a half months later.

† *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 133.

‡ See *ante*, p. 32.

§ Hill and Dent's *Memorials of the Old Square*, 1897, p. 25.

|| Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 36.

Lichfield since 1698,* where no doubt Sarah would go to visit her. And, in any case, it certainly seems unlikely that Michael would regularly open a bookstall at Birmingham, under the very windows of his brother Andrew's shop in the market-place.†

Possibly Cornelius Ford, as a man with some regard for books, at any rate those of a theological character, had had dealings with Michael Johnson, who at various times seems to have traversed the whole countryside in pursuit of business. But Michael's affection for Sarah was certainly never initiated or cemented by a common love of literature, for Dr. Johnson himself tells us in his "Annals" that his mother was "unacquainted with books," and that had she "been more literate, they had been better companions."‡

The settlement on the marriage of Michael Johnson, of the city of Lichfield, bookseller, and Sarah Ford, spinster, daughter of Cornelius Ford, of Packwood, in the county of Warwick, gentleman, was dated 11 June 1706, eight days before the actual ceremony. By it Cornelius undertook that Sarah, at the time of her marriage, should be worth in goods and money the sum of £230; and to pay the trustees another £200 within nine months after the marriage. Michael, on his part, undertook to pay in £100 to the trustees within the like period. The two sums were to be put out at interest till a convenient time came for purchasing some land or property which was to be held in trust for Michael, then for Sarah his widow, and then for their issue. Michael also undertook that if they had but one child and that a daughter, then the further sum of £300 over and above the two sums mentioned would be paid out of his estate on their death to such daughter; and that, if they had more than one child, then the sum of £500 would be paid equally among them or in such proportions as the parents might jointly direct in proper legal fashion. If Sarah survived him, she was to have the use of all his ready money, household goods, and stock-in-trade, for her life, or else to receive five per cent. per annum on their full value. And Michael, with a heart full of hope, undertook that his personal estate, when he came to die, should be worth at

* See *ante*, p. 38.

† See *ante*, p. 18, and *post*, p. 108.

‡ Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 132.

least £500, after his debts, funeral charges, and expenses of every kind were satisfied.*

The trustees of the marriage settlement were men of substance, Richard Pyott, of Streethay, in the county of Stafford, esquire, and Joseph Ford, of Stourbridge, in the county of Worcester, gentleman. The latter was, of course, her uncle, of whose career we shall hear more later on.† Richard Pyott was head of a family of county rank long established at Streethay, some two miles out of Lichfield.‡

“Mickell Johnses of Lichfield and Sara Ford” were duly married at Packwood on 19 June 1706.§ The stalwart|| bridegroom of forty-nine must have looked an imposing figure by the side of his small and slender ¶ bride—herself within three years of forty—as they walked out of the fine old timber porch of the church.**

Michael Johnson’s signature to the marriage settlement was witnessed by Sarah’s brother, Samuel Ford, and her brother-in-law, John Harrison.†† It is of interest that Samuel Ford himself lived a good many years at Packwood. Perhaps he was already settled there when old Cornelius came to the parish to spend the evening of his days ; indeed it may have been the son’s presence there that brought the father. Certainly Samuel was living there in the year following his sister Sarah’s marriage, for on 30 October 1707, as of Packwood, he was married at Kings Norton to Jane, elder daughter of Richard Chambers, of Farmon’s Green, parish of Kings Norton, gentleman, and aunt of the Rev. Richard Chambers, Rector of Cradley and Prebendary of Hereford, who preceded Johnson at Pembroke by some sixteen years. The Chambers family was a very old one at Northfield and Kings Norton, and no doubt had long been on terms of friendship with the Fords. That it was fairly well-to-do is evident

* *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson’s Ancestry*, pp. 171-2.

† See *post*, p. 140.

‡ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson’s Ancestry*, p. 173.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 202.

|| See *post*, p. 100.

¶ See *post*, p. 102.

** A view of Packwood church accompanies Mr. Sargisson’s article in *The Bookman* already alluded to (*ante*, p. 37) ; and there is another in *The Sphere* for 18 Sept. 1909.

†† *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson’s Ancestry*, p. 172.

from the fact that the two daughters of Richard Chambers each received £350 under his will.*

But it was on her mother's side that this aunt of Johnson's had connexions of more interest to us as we try to reconstruct the Ford family circle. For Mrs. Samuel's grandfather, the Rev. Timothy White, a Cambridge graduate, had been Vicar of Northfield since 1639, and Master of Leicester Hospital, Warwick, from 1650 till his death in 1660; while her uncle, another Timothy White, who went to Trinity, and not—like his father—to Clare, held the Warwickshire vicarage of Alcester from 1675 till he died in 1712. And her stepfather—whom her mother married soon after the death of Richard Chambers in 1680—was one Thomas Cotchett, a Derbyshire squire of good estate,† who by his conscientious work as a county justice won the good opinion of the Duke of Devonshire ‡—the first Duke :

* *Ibid.*, p. 154; *Johnsonian Gleanings*, ante, I., 10; and *post*, IV., Appendix E. Mrs. Ford's brother, Timothy Chambers, father of the Prebendary, married Mary, daur. of William Eborall, of Balsall, par. of Hampton in Arden, esquire, and granddaur. of Samuel Eborall, J.P., of Balsall, and of Gray's Inn, who married Sarah, daur. of Henry Porter, of Edgbaston, probably direct ancestor of Harry Porter, whose widow Johnson married. The sisters Ann and Israel Norton, who married respectively Hunter and Holbrooke, Johnson's schoolmasters at Lichfield (see *post*, pp. 110, 114), were second cousins of Mrs. Timothy Chambers, their grandfather, Thomas Norton, having married Sarah's sister, Anne Porter. Timothy Chambers's daughter, Mary, married Thomas Jesson, Johnson's second cousin (see *post*, p. 179). Here is a tangle of relationships for the ingenious!

† See *post*, IV., Appendix E.

‡ "Mr. Cotchett" is mentioned as a J.P. in a letter of Rev. John Ward to Thomas Coke, M.P., dated 15 Mch. 1698/9 (*Historical MSS. Commission*, 12th Report, Appendix II., p. 387); and in a letter of Sir Henry Every to the same, in 1699 (*ibid.*, p. 394). In a letter of 10 June 1702, R. Wilmot, hearing that there is to be a new commission of the peace for Derbyshire and that some of the old magistrates are to be displaced, pleads with Thomas Coke on behalf of Mr. Cotchett, who "seems to be a good natured, moderate, gentlemanlike man, and I believe will [not] give disturbance in elections" (*ibid.*, App. III., p. 10). Robert Hardinge (uncle to Dr. Johnson's friend, Caleb Hardinge—see *post*, p. 132), writing to Coke on 19 June 1702, says:—"As to Mr. C[otchett], I have not seen Mr. Wilmot, but will speak to him" (*ibid.*, p. 11). And writing to Coke on 6 July 1702, Capt. John Beresford says:—"We hear a discourse in the country that Mr. Cotchett is likely to retire with Mr. Spateman out of business which I am sorry for; he is much resorted to and well spoken of by our neighbours about Ashborne. I suppose him one of the best of the gang and could wish he might be spared" (*ibid.*, p. 12). And on 25 July 1702 Coke was thus addressed by Lord Keeper Sir Nathan Wright:—"I have lately received a letter from the Duke of Devonshire, wherein he complains of the new Commission of the Peace for Derby: and more particularly for leaving out Mr. Spateman and Mr. Cotchett, both, as he says, men of estate and very active and useful justices in

great-great-grandfather of that Duke whom Johnson visited at Chatsworth.* It is rather curious that one of those named as likely to supplant this stepfather of Johnson's aunt on the bench was Mr. Brooke Boothby, the father of Hill Boothby.†

The marriage of Samuel Ford and Jane Chambers gave Johnson a cousin of some interest to us, especially as he has remained quite unknown up to now. This was the Rev. Samuel Ford. Born in 1717 at Stroxtun, near Grantham, in Lincolnshire, where his parents for some unknown reason had gone to live, his father being churchwarden there at the time, he was educated at the Grammar School of Sutton Coldfield, under Mr. Paul Lowe, whence he proceeded to Oxford, matriculating from Trinity College in 1736, some half-dozen years after his famous cousin had left the university. But in his second year there he migrated to Cambridge, and was admitted to Emmanuel College, in 1738, as a sizar ; taking his B.A. in 1740 and his M.A. in 1744. In 1742 he was appointed Rector of Brampton Abbots, near Ross, in Herefordshire ; and in 1754 became a pluralist by accepting the vicarage of Monkland, in the same county, receiving the necessary dispensation to hold the two livings. The Monkland living he resigned in 1780, but Brampton Abbots he continued to hold until his death at his own house in Castle Street, Hereford, in May 1793. It is not known that he ever resided on either of his livings, so perhaps Hereford had been his home for over half a century. His will shows him to have been married, but he mentions no children and no relatives of his own, so probably he was the only surviving member of his father's family.‡ It is very remarkable that there is

the country, and for putting in Mr. Brook Boothby and Mr. John Beresford, the last a known Jacobite and neither of them of any estate, or other good qualities to recommend them to the Commission" (*ibid.*, p. 14). Robert Hardinge wrote again to Coke on 12 Oct. 1702 that " Mr. Cotchett's place is supplied," at Derby, by Sir Charles Pye (*ibid.*, p. 17). On 5 Apl. 1706 " Mr. Cotchett " is mentioned as having been a magistrate for Morleston Hundred six or seven years earlier (*ibid.*, p. 70).

* See *post*, p. 62.

† See *ante*, p. 24.

‡ In a letter to *The Times Literary Supplement* for 15 Sept. 1921, I gave a condensed account of Samuel Ford, who matriculated 11 Mch. 1735/6, at Trinity College, Oxford, as son of Samuel Ford, of Erdington, co. Warwick, gent., and aged 18. Presumably his father was then living at Erdington, which was a hamlet in the parish of Aston-juxta-Birmingham, where his grandfather, Henry Ford, had lived over a century earlier (*Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 154). At

no record in Johnsonian literature of the existence of this clerical cousin of the Doctor's, who spent a long life in a county not very remote from that central part of England with which the Doctor

the reference just cited, I was unable definitely to identify this graduate with Johnson's cousin; and knew nothing of his later career, which it has taken much inquiry to piece together. The key to the problem lay in the admission register of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, which Mr. R. Gardner, the Bursar, and Mr. J. B. Peace, kindly consulted for me when I learned that a man of the name entered there in 1738. This was the entry found under 11 May 1738:—"Samuel Ford, son of Samuel Ford, gent., born at Str——n, Lincolnshire, brought up at Sutton Sch., Warwickshire, under Mr. Paul Lowe, admitted of ye 2nd year from Trinity College, Oxford, 20 years old, sizar." The name of Ford's birthplace was, unfortunately, indecipherable, as several of the middle letters had been written over by way of correction, with only confusion as the result. But Mr. Peace hazarded that the word was "Strawson," which represents the pronunciation of Stroxton, near Grantham. The Rev. Sumner C. Wood, Rector of Stroxton, kindly had the Bishop's Transcripts of the parish registers searched (those in his keeping go back only to 1735), with the very satisfactory result that this entry was found:—"1717. Aug. 25. Samuell y^e son of Mr. Samuell Ford of Stroxton and Jane his wife was baptized. Sam^l Ford, Churchwarden." Mr. Wood tells me that Stroxton is a purely agricultural parish, which never seems to have had more than about 100 inhabitants. The Hall at that time was let by Mr. Andrew Hacket to Lord Cardigan; and the Rector was John Williamson. Samuel Ford evidently occupied one of the farms, and what took him from the country of his origin, where he was among his kith and kin, to a remote village 60 miles distant, I cannot conjecture. He married Jane Chambers at Kings Norton in 1707, and had children baptised at Packwood in 1708 and 1709 (*Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, Tabular Pedigree XXIX). And in 1717 he reappears at Stroxton, a churchwarden and therefore not exactly a newcomer. A deed of 1 Jan. 1717/18 describes Light Farm, Packwood, as "now or late in y^e occupation of Samuell Ford" (*ibid.*, p. 173), but this description may have been taken from an older document and not constitute evidence that he had already returned to his own country from Stroxton. A letter he wrote in Sept. 1731 shows that then, at least, he was back in the Birmingham area (*ibid.*, p. 154). I do not know when or where he died. Mr. Wood tells me that the name of Ford does not occur in the Stroxton register from 1735 to 1750.

Samuel Ford, the younger, was presented to the Rectory of Brampton Abbots, by the Bishop of Hereford, in 1742, and was succeeded by Francis Brickenden in 1793. Duncumb makes the following remark about him:—"Of these rectors . . . Samuel Ford was related on the female side, to the great Dr. S. Johnson, and in his features exhibited a mild resemblance of that literary Colossus" (Duncumb's *Herefordshire*, 1812, II., 333). As Duncumb, after taking his degree at Cambridge, settled in Hereford in 1788, and himself took orders in 1791 (*Dict. Nat. Biog.*), there can be little doubt that he would know Ford personally, who, as we shall see, died in Hereford in 1793. In 1754 a dispensation to hold two livings—Brampton Abbots, Rectory, and Monkland, Vicarage, both in Hereford diocese, of the combined value of £230 *per annum*—was granted to Samuel Ford, M.A. (*Gent's Mag.*, 1754, p. 436). The Rev. Charles E. Whitcombe, late Vicar of Monkland, could only tell me that Samuel Ford was Vicar from 1754, when Joseph Carless was his curate, till 1780, when he resigned, being succeeded by John Thomas, who had been curate since 1779: he did

had so many close associations. Duncumb, who was living in Hereford at the time of the Rev. Samuel Ford's death, tells us that he in his features "exhibited a mild resemblance" to the literary Colossus.

not think Ford was ever resident. The Rev. R. H. Bird, Rector of Brampton Abbots, tells me that, although appointed Rector in 1742, Ford did not baptize, etc., till 1758, but from then he went on steadily till 1787; that his signature is large and clear; and that it is probable that, in order not to favour one parish more than another, he worked them both from Hereford. But in this connexion it must be noted that his mother's nephew, the Rev. Richard Chambers, Prebendary of Hereford, who lived at Cradley, in the same county, by his will of 22 May 1772, appoints as exor. "my cousin the Rev. Samuel Ford, of Ross, Hereford" (see *post*, IV., Appendix E), Brampton Abbots being close to Ross. Mr. Bird has kindly looked up the *Hereford Journal*, and in the issue of 8 May 1793 found this obituary notice:—"On Monday night died, in Castle Street, in the city, in the 77th year of his age, the Rev. Samuel Ford, Rector of Brampton Abbots in this county." As 8 May was a Wednesday, Ford must have died on 6 May. I have not yet found his burial place, in Hereford or elsewhere.

Will of Samuel Ford, of the city of Hereford, clerk, dated 6 Dec. 1792. I give to my servant, Elizabeth Jones, my wearing apparel and silver watch. To my wife Mary, my ready money, arrears of tithe, and interest of all my monies, my household goods (not bequeathed by me); and the residue of my real and personal estate I devise to William Thomas of Byland [? Bagland], co. Glamorgan, clerk, and Samuel Carless, of the city of Hereford, mercer, upon trust that they suffer my wife to take the profits, etc., of my messuage in Great Castle Street, in the city of Hereford, and the interest, etc., of my personal and real estate, during her life, and if the said profits do not amount to £80 per annum above the rent of the said messuage, call in so much of my principal money as shall be enough to make an annuity of £80 to my said wife above the said rent; and at her death they shall pay £100 to Elizabeth Cox, niece of my wife; £200 to Elizabeth Jones, my servant, as a reward for long and faithful service; and £50 my wife shall dispose of, if she thinks fit, to the said Elizabeth Jones, and, if she leaves no such disposition, it shall sink into the rest of my estate. The residue of my estate, after the decease of my wife, I bequeath to Elizabeth Thomas, of the city of Hereford, niece of my wife. Exors., William Thomas and Samuel Carless. Signed, Samuel Ford. Wits., Jas. Lane, attorney, of Hereford, Geo. Monington, Serjeant in the Herefordshire Militia, John Powell, one of the Band in the same. Proved by the exors. named, 28 June 1793, in P.C.C. [314 Dodwell].

It seems very likely that Ford's wife was a Thomas; she had a niece Elizabeth Thomas, while he appointed the Rev. William Thomas of Bagland, co. Glam., an exor. of his will, and in 1780 resigned the living of Monkland to his curate, the Rev. John Thomas.

It is curious to find the Rev. Samuel Ford associated—like Dr. Johnson—with the Carless family (see *post*, p. 160). Samuel Carless [1761–1851], of Hereford, Ford's other exor., was a son of the Rev. Joseph Carless [1718–1807], presumably the Joseph Carless who had been Ford's curate at Monkland in 1754. The Rev. Joseph Carless married his distant cousin Ann Carless, half-sister to the Rev. Walter Carless [1714–57], who married Edmund Hector's sister Ann (see the elaborate tabular pedigree in Thomas A. C. Attwood's *Family of Carless or Carles*, privately printed, 1916). This common connexion with the Carlesses makes it still more strange if Samuel Ford and Samuel Johnson did not recognise their cousinship by some kind of intellectual or social intercourse.

The cousins must surely have met in early life, and, considering too that they were *alumni* of the same University, it is strange if there was no intercourse between them in their later years, especially when we recall Johnson's veneration for the established church. If Boswell had ever heard of this pluralist parson, he would almost certainly have alluded to him somewhere in his book, and, one might expect, would have sought his aid after Johnson's death, in the compilation at least of the early portion.

But to return to the main current of our narrative. There still stands at Packwood, about a mile east of the church, a substantial red brick house called "Light Farm," with a very fine doorway, over which, in a semi-circular panel, appear the initials TFI, with the date 1690.* The initials are those of the then representatives of the Fetherston family of Packwood House, who owned a large estate in the district.† Now we know that in 1718 Samuel Ford was, or had been, in occupation of Light Farm, under Thomas Fetherston.‡ It seems therefore very possible that Cornelius himself lived at Light Farm, and that his daughter was married from there to Michael Johnson; and also that Samuel Ford remained on there after his father's death. If so this house is of much interest to all those of the Johnsonian faith.

That Cornelius Ford was a man of considerable substance is evident from the terms of the marriage settlement. He had seven children, yet he could assure the payment to his daughter Sarah of the sum of £430 as her portion. It is a task beyond the powers of the most ingenious economist to compare convincingly in terms of actual figures the value of money in those days as compared with its present value. But it is safe to assert that Sarah's portion was equivalent to several thousand pounds in modern money. When we find that at this period the annual value of the estate of a prominent Lancashire squire, who married into the peerage and in other ways maintained the

* A good view of this doorway is given with Mr. Sargisson's article in *The Bookman* (see *ante*, p. 37); and in *The Sphere* for 18 Sept. 1909.

† Thomas and Joan Fetherston. Thomas Fetherston [1633-1714], of Packwood, married in 1654 Joan, daughter of Richard Woodward: she was living in 1713 (*Visitation of England and Wales*, "Notes," vol. 13, ed. F. A. Crisp, p. 25).

‡ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 173.

proper dignity of his position, was but £482,* we see clearly how standards of value have changed; and still more clearly when we find also that he was able to engage grooms,† coachmen,‡ and cowmen,§ at an apparently standard annual wage of 50 shillings.

Whether the house in Market Street, which Michael Johnson occupied in 1695,|| was on the site of the house now so familiar as the birthplace of the Doctor and standing in the Market Square, at the corner of Market Street and Breadmarket Street, there is at present no conclusive evidence to show. When he purchased the corner house at the end of March 1707 for £80, it was in the occupation of Edward Howcott, yet it was described as having been formerly in the occupation of Michael Johnson, so most probably he was there in 1695. The house, until Michael acquired it, was the property of one Nathaniel Barton, then of the city of London, silkman, who had inherited it in 1689 from his mother, Mrs. Sarah Barton, of Coventry, widow.¶

It has generally been assumed that the birthplace, more or less in its present form, was standing in the seventeenth century, before Michael purchased it. But this idea is negated by the evidence. It is clear that, immediately after purchase, he set about demolishing the Bartons' house and building in its place a larger and better one. Having set the new house forward very considerably on both its fronts—the only way of increasing its size, abutting as it did on both sides against other houses**—he acquired from the Corporation, in June 1708, that lease of encroachment which, in August 1767, the citizens of Lichfield honoured themselves no less than their celebrated townsman by renewing on very easy terms.††

Poor Michael did not carry out his undertaking to pay the sum of £100 to the trustees under the marriage settlement within nine months. Cornelius Ford carried out his part of the obligation, though in thirteen instead of nine months, by assigning to the trustees, on 31 July 1707, his two mortgages on his estate at Walsall,‡‡ which

* *The Diary of Nicholas Blundell of Crosby, 1702–28*, ed. T. Ellison Gibson, 1895, p. 145.

† *Ibid.*, p. 3.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

|| See *ante*, p. 13.

¶ See *post*, IV., Appendix A.

** See *post*, IV., Appendix A.

†† See Harwood's *Lichfield*, p. 397; and Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, IV., 372.

‡‡ See *ante*, pp. 37–8.

John Pershouse, of Roynalls Hall, in that parish, undertook to redeem within the year following by payment to them of £210 odd.* Richard Pyott having ceased to function as a trustee, the money was paid to Joseph Ford, the other trustee. But it was not laid out, as intended, in the purchase of property: it remained in the hands of Joseph Ford, and afterwards of his son "Parson" Ford, they paying interest thereon to Michael Johnson. It was not until 16 September 1725 that the trust was partially straightened out by Michael conveying his house in the Market Square—then valued at £200—to trustees, in favour of himself, his wife, and their children, he at the same time receiving £100, for his own use, out of the £200 still remaining in the hands of "Parson" Ford. Michael's obligation was thus discharged; but "Parson" Ford must still have been left with £100 on which he would have to pay interest.†

"Mr. Cornelius Ford"—and only men of some standing were dignified by the title of "Mr." in the registers of that day—was buried at Curdworth on 11 May 1709,‡ some four months too soon for him to gaze upon the infant features of his grandson Samuel Johnson. As he was so near to death, and seventy-seven years of age, it is not surprising that he was "weake in body" when he made his will on 28 April 1709. He described himself as of Packwood, gentleman, and left thirty shillings to the poor of Packwood and Knowle, as well as twenty shillings to the poor of Curdworth, "if I am buried there," perhaps doubting if his family would trouble to take his body a road journey of fifteen miles to a distant churchyard. A noble apiece was to go to the domestic servants where he should happen to die. To his family he made various small bequests, amounting in all to £430. He mentioned no real estate except the "Parsonage Close" at Sutton Coldfield, which he left to his son Nathaniel.§ His Kings Norton estate he had transferred to his son Joseph in June 1707.||

The principal interest of his will lies in its revelation of his literary tastes, which were evidently much influenced by his theological inclinations. To his son-in-law, John Hardwicke, he left *The Saint's*

* *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 207-8.

† See *post*, IV., Appendix A.

‡ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 199.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

|| *Ibid.*, p. 133.

Everlasting Rest, by Richard Baxter, whom Cornelius had probably heard in his early days, for that eloquent divine lived at Kidderminster from 1649 to 1660. Johnson told Boswell to read any of Baxter's works, as they were all good * ; and of his *Reasons of the Christian Religion* he said that it " contained the best collection of the evidences of the divinity of the Christian system." † To John Hardwicke Cornelius also left *An Alarm to the Unconverted*, by Joseph Alleine, ejected from Taunton in 1662 ; and " all Hall's works," except his *Practical and Polemical Commentary on Timothy*, 1658, which he allocated to his son Nathaniel. We have already seen that Thomas Hall, ejected from the curacy of Kings Norton in 1662, had been a civilizing influence in the parish, ‡ and there can be little doubt that Cornelius was personally familiar with him. Probably it was early friendship with Hall that gave Cornelius his evangelical sympathies, so far removed from the high-churchmanship of his son-in-law Michael Johnson. His library included yet another work by an ejected minister, Matthew Poole's *Annotations upon the Holy Bible*.

To his daughter-in-law, Mrs. Joseph Ford, he left the " great Bible " that had been given to his wife. To his grandson Cornelius, son of Joseph Ford and afterwards to become the celebrated " Parson " Ford, § he left his " Latine Bible." It is possible that he had made some endeavour to master Latin himself, for the " dictionary " which he left to his grandson Cornelius Harrison, afterwards Perpetual Curate of Darlington, was no doubt a Latin dictionary. || Little can he have guessed how much significance the word " dictionary " was going to have in the career of the new grandchild then expected in the Johnson household ; or how that grandchild was destined to invest the word with a new importance.

All records of Cornelius Ford go to show that socially he stood on a considerably higher plane than did the ordinary yeoman ; and it is probable that in education he was also much that worthy individual's superior.

* Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, IV., 226.

† *Ibid.*, IV., 237.

‡ See *ante*, p. 37.

§ See *post*, p. 144.

|| *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 133-4, 191.

CHAPTER III

BIRTH AND INFANCY

1709-1713

Birth and baptism at Lichfield—The Rev. William Baker, Vicar of St. Mary's Church—A very delicate child—Michael Johnson Sheriff of the City—Little Samuel's godfathers : Dr. Samuel Swynfen, and Richard Wakefield, Town Clerk of Lichfield—Infantile ailments—Put out to nurse in George Lane—His foster-mother, Mrs. Marklew—The family of Marklew alias Bellison—Mrs. Johnson's visits to her baby—George Lane, and the Marklews, in later years—Samuel home again, but very sickly—A cousin born to him close by—His father publishes Dean Binckes's sermon—Visit to Trysull—"Cousin Harriotts," of Trysull Manor House—Dr. Attwood, of Worcester, examines the baby's eyes—Journey to London with his mother—Touched by Queen Anne for the "King's Evil"—John Nicholson, the bookseller, of Little Britain, with whom the Johnsons stayed—Samuel's memories of the London visit—Mrs. Johnson's cousin, Cornelius Jesson, steward of Christ's Hospital—Mrs. Johnson goes shopping—To London in the stage-coach, but back "in the waggon"—Lichfield shares the widespread belief in the royal touch—Sir John Floyer's acceptance of the superstition—Michael Johnson swallows his Jacobite sympathies to sit on the bench—Little Samuel's first lesson in theology—His reputed enthusiasm for Dr. Sacheverell : the whole story threshed out—Richard Hammond, the Lichfield apothecary who sponsored the story—Dr. Sacheverell's Lichfield connexions—Birth of Nathaniel Johnson—Little Samuel made to "show off" to the neighbours—The tragedy of the ducklings : Who wrote the verse?—Four versions of this poetic gem—Early powers of memory—Childhood spent in a brand-new house—Michael Johnson still publishing.

SAMUEL, the first child of Michael Johnson and Sarah his wife, was born about four o'clock in the afternoon of Wednesday, the 18th of September, 1709, *new style*, or 7th of September, *old style*, at his father's house overlooking the Market Square of Lichfield ; and his

baptism is recorded under the latter date in the register of St. Mary's Church, which describes his father as "gentleman,"* a title which it was quite right to give to Michael Johnson, if only because of the civic office he held at the time. Michael was at this time in his fifty-third year, and Sarah aged forty years and six months : they had been married for three years and three months. So that they were very mature parents to welcome a first-born child.

The baptism of Samuel would, no doubt, be a private ceremony, in the room, over the shop, which has always been pointed out as the one in which he was actually born. The Vicar of St. Mary's at this time, who in all probability performed the ceremony, was the Rev. William Baker. He is of interest to us not only on that account, but also because he remained Vicar until his death in August 1732—when he was buried at the Cathedral—and so was the clergyman under whom Johnson must have sat during the whole of his boyhood, when he was at home and not staying away from church altogether.† A son of Abraham Baker, of London, gentleman, William was left an orphan while quite a little boy. But his mother provided for his education and upbringing by leaving him to the guardianship of her brother, the Rev. Thomas Thache, of Stonehouse, Gloucestershire.‡ In due course he was sent to Trinity, Oxford, where he matriculated 7th July 1665, aged 16. He took his B.A. from Magdalen Hall in 1669, and his M.A.

* *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 173, 200 ; *Johnsonian Gleanings*, ante, I., 3-4.

† See *post*, p. 81.

‡ The will of his mother, Mary Baker, of Southwark, widow, dated 1657/8, was proved in 1658, and in it he is referred to as "being at present but a child" (information of late Sir R. T. White-Thomson). Thomas, son of Thomas Thache, of Highworth, Wilts, *pléb.*, matric. 4 Dec. 1635, aged 18, at St. John's College, Oxford ; he took his B.A. 18 June 1639. Thomas, son of T. Thache, of Sapperton, co. Glouc., cler., matric. at New College 29 Mch. 1677, aged 19 ; he took his B.A. 1680, and M.A. 1683 ; rector of Rudford, 1685, and vicar of Churcham, co. Glouc., 1697 (*Foster's Alumni Oxonienses*). A note in the Stonehouse register states that John Norris (bapt. 16 July 1615), son of William Norris, a previous vicar, was appointed to the living on his father's death in 1642, but was soon ousted by the Parliamentarians, "and one Mr. Thos. Wallace, a Scotchman, put in who was married here Sep. 29, 1645. Hee dyed and was buried Jan. 2, 1653. Mr. Thomas Thache succeeded him and kept the place till the return of King Charles II w^h he was forced to leave it (to Mr. John Norris w^o had been turn'd out) and removed to Saperton to w^h hee was presented by Sir Robt. Atkins y^e Judge. Mr. Norris came in again 1661 at Ladyday for I finde that Mr. Thache paid the poor rate for 1660" (*inf.* late Sir R. T. White-Thomson).

from New College on 23 January 1671.^{2*} He became Vicar of St. Mary's, Lichfield, in 1681,[†] and held the living for fifty-one years; in 1690 he was appointed to the Prebendal stall of Wolvey; and he was also sub-chantor of the Cathedral.[‡] Ten days after Johnson's birth, the Vicar's eldest son, Brudenell§ Baker, after a five months' voyage from Plymouth, landed at Fort St. George, Madras, where he was very well received by the Dean of Lichfield's son, Gulston Addison, brother of Joseph Addison and just appointed Governor of Fort St. George.||

Johnson himself, looking back fifty-five years, tells us in his "Annals" that his

mother had a very difficult and dangerous labour, and was assisted by George Hector, a man-midwife of great reputation. I was born almost dead, and could not cry for some time. When he had me in his arms, he said, "Here is a brave boy."[¶]

Considering the age of the mother, and that it was her first child, it is not surprising if all did not go quite smoothly. George Hector was the uncle of Johnson's schoolfellow, Edmund Hector, of whom we shall hear later,** and had adopted his father's profession of a surgeon: he was a married man of thirteen years' standing.^{††}

* Foster's *Alumni Oxonienses*. His son Thomas Baker (1689-1745) was also an Oxford man: he became a Minor Canon of Westminster and Priest of the Chapel Royal (see Foster's *Alumni Oxonienses*, and *Admissions to St. John's College, Cambridge*, Part III., ed. R.F. Scott, p. 456). The Rev. William Baker had two daughters, Frances, who died unmarried 27 Dec. 1755, aged 78, and was buried in the south aisle of the Cathedral; and Catherine, who married Thomas Remington, of Harlaxton, co. Lincoln, in 1714: she died a widow 6 Jan. 1756, aged 73, and was buried by her sister, leaving a son, the Rev. Daniel William Remington (1715-88), Vicar of St. Mary's, Lichfield, from 1772, whose daughter Mary married Thomas White, grandson of the Rev. John Hunter and first cousin and executor to Anna Seward (*inf.* late Sir R. T. White-Thomson; and see *Johnsonian Gleanings*, ante, I., 11).

† Harwood's *Lichfield*, p. 458.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 256.

§ The Rev. William Baker married Dorothy, daughter of Thomas Brudenell, of Stanton Wyville, co. Leic.; she died 2 June 1691, aged 38, and was buried in the south aisle of the Cathedral, where her husband placed a memorial to her (Harwood's *Lichfield*, p. 97).

|| See a letter from him, dated 14 Oct. 1709, printed by me in *Notes and Queries*, 11th Series, ii, 101-3.

¶ Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 129.

** See *post*, pp. 124-5.

†† *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 152-3. The Lichfield census of 1695 (see ante, p. 18) shows the Hectors then to have been living in Market

Michael Johnson, at the time of his famous son's birth, was Sheriff of Lichfield, and on the day following, in accordance with ancient custom, he had to make an official perambulation of the city boundaries, which involved a ride of sixteen miles. Mrs. Johnson was sufficiently recovered to feel an interest in her husband's high office, and when she asked him whom he would invite to the "Riding," he proudly answered, "All the town *now*." "He feasted the citizens with uncommon magnificence," said his son, "and was the last but one that maintained the splendour of the Riding."*

Samuel Johnson was fortunate in his godfathers. The one with whom we are most familiar is, of course, Dr. Samuel Swynfen, who at the time had lodgings in Michael Johnson's house to enable him to practise his profession in the city. He is said to have used these lodgings only as "occasional accommodation,"† and to have spent some of his time on the old family estate of Swynfen, in Weeford, a couple of miles outside Lichfield. Samuel was grandson of Pepys's "great Mr. Swinfen, the Parliament man," of 1662.‡ At this time a young man of about thirty, he had taken his degree at Pembroke College, Oxford, ten years before, and in the meantime had proceeded M.A. and acted for a time as lecturer in grammar to the University. He had also taken a medical degree in 1706, so that he was a man of considerable educational attainments. Thirteen months after Samuel Johnson's birth he married, and continued his practice in Lichfield. His two eldest children were baptised at St. Mary's in 1711 and 1712, but the remainder at the Cathedral. In July 1726, on the death of his elder brother Richard, late M.P. for Tamworth, he became head of the family and succeeded to Swynfen and its rather serious debts. The following year he removed to Birmingham, and practised in the Square there till his death in May 1736. A fortnight before his death he had contracted to sell Swynfen for £19,000 odd: his eldest son completed the contract in the following July.§

Street:—"Edmd. Hector, Gent, reputed 58; Dorcas his wife, 50; Geo., 17, Benj., 13, their sons; Ann, their Daught^r, 6; Ann Baxter, 17, Rich^d Bird, 15, Servt^s."

* Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 129-30.

† *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Dr. Samuel Johnson* [by William Shaw], 1785.

p. 10.

‡ See *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, under John Swynfen.

§ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 229-30.

Dr. Swynfen is said to have been

a man of considerable reputation in his profession as a physician, but was still more eminent for the liberality of his mind and the goodness of his heart.*

That Johnson retained a great regard for him is evident from the fact of his having for so many years provided a home in his London house for Elizabeth Swynfen, Mrs. Desmoulins, his third surviving daughter, born in 1716.† It has been suggested that Johnson derived his name of Samuel from Dr. Swynfen, but as Mrs. Johnson had a brother Samuel,‡ and named her second son after another brother, Nathaniel,§ it seems more probable that he got it from his uncle. It is pretty clear that Mrs. Johnson had the principal say when it came to naming the children: she "had no value for his relations,"|| and was determined that their names should not be perpetuated by her offspring.

Johnson's other godfather, Richard Wakefield, though less known to us, was no less respectable and enlightened a man. Probably descended from the Wakefield family of Stapenhill, near Tutbury, to which belonged the celebrated Gilbert Wakefield, he does not seem to have been a native of Lichfield, though settled there as early as 1686. A lawyer by profession, he was appointed Coroner and Town Clerk of Lichfield in 1688.¶ In 1705 he lost, aged 44, his wife Jane, a daughter of John Rawlins, a former Town Clerk of Lichfield, and sister of Michael Rawlins, a prominent local man who married one of the Dyotts of Freeford and lived at the Friary, where in later years Dr. Johnson used to visit Mrs. Cobb.** He held his joint offices until 1721, when he had to resign them, owing to some irregularities of which we have not any particulars. He retired to Tutbury, but seems to have returned

* *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Dr. Samuel Johnson* [by William Shaw], 1785, p. 10.

† *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 230.

‡ See *ante*, p. 42, and *post*, p. 106.

§ See *ante*, p. 38, and *post*, pp. 105-6.

|| Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 132.

¶ On 8 May 1688 he was appointed Steward of the Manor of Lichfield (*inf.* W. H. Russell, Cheltenham).

** At the time of the Lichfield census of 1695 (see *ante*, p. 18), the Rawlinses and the Wakefields were living in Bird Street; their names adjoin in the list:—"Mary Rawlins, Widd., gent., 61; Mich. her son, 10; Bridgett her Daught^r, 28; Eliz. Embry, 23, Eliz. Davis, 20, and Wm. Bird, 15, her servt^s.—Rich^d. Wakefield, Gent., reputed 50^{li} per Ann., 40; Jane Wakefield his wife, 36; John Allen, 19 yrs., Mary Shakeshaft, 19, servt^s; Joseph Adie, Batchelor, 23 years."

to Lichfield before his death in 1733. To his "godsons Mr. Richard Bayley and Mr. Samuel Johnson" he left five pounds apiece. He was a very generous benefactor to the poor of Tutbury, as well as to Lichfield, the city which had cast him off.*

Harwood, the historian of Lichfield, tells us that Richard Wakefield "was a diligent antiquary, and a very inquisitive and ingenious man," who "made collections from the Duchy-Court relating to the honour of Tutbury."† A childless widower, with studious tastes which he had ample means to gratify, we can well believe that he would be a constant visitor to Michael Johnson's shop,‡ and that a friendship would spring up between them sufficient to embolden the bookseller to ask him to stand godfather to his first-born son.

Johnson's "Annals" inform us, with a curious naïvety, that, a few weeks after his birth, an inflammation was discovered on his buttock, which was at first, he believed, taken for a burn; but it "soon appeared to be a natural disorder," which "swelled, broke, and healed." Under Michael Johnson's persuasion he was "put to one Marclew, commonly called Bellison, the servant, or wife of a servant of my father, to be nursed in George Lane." It was here discovered that his eyes were affected. An issue was cut in his left arm, which he believed was kept open till he was six years old. His mother afterwards told him that he took little notice of the operation, having his "little hand in a custard." Her relation of the incident so impressed him that he grew to think he actually remembered it; but he "laid the scene in the wrong house."§

The Marklew family, which thus became associated with Johnson

* *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 227-9.

† Harwood's *Lichfield*, p. 439.

‡ In the Birthplace at Lichfield is a copy of *The Common Prayer-Book, The Best Companion in the House and Closet, as well as in the Temple*, 16th ed., London, printed for James and John Knapton, at the Crown in St. Paul's Church-Yard, 1725, in which is inscribed:—"Bought of Mrs. Johnson | 16 June 1732 | pd. 01s. ood. | Mrs. Hebbe." And on the title page is inscribed the signature of "R. Wakefield." "Mrs. Priscilla Hebbe" was Richard Wakefield's "servant and housekeeper," to whom in his will, in the following year, he bequeathed an annuity of £10 or a lump sum of £100 (*Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 227). Evidently Mrs. Hebbe purchased it from Mrs. Johnson, and transferred it to her master, who wrote his name in it.

§ Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 129-31. As regards "laying the scene in the wrong house." I take it that the "right house" was Mrs. Marklew's, and the "wrong house" the Johnsons' own home; or perhaps *vice versa*.

immediately after his birth, was a fairly wide-spreading one in Lichfield, and most of its members were in poor circumstances. In 1695 there were five Marklew households in the town, all closely related. The registers substantiate Johnson's statement that the family bore the alternative name of Bellison, but it does not appear why this was so—whether it had its origin in illegitimacy, or some other cause. If Bellison was the popular name, Marklew was the legal one: there is not a single Bellison enumerated in the 1695 census, and no member of the family called himself anything but Marklew in his will. The particular member in whom we are interested was John Marklew, born about 1679, who was a brickmaker by trade and lived in the parish of St. Chad's, which includes George Lane. His first wife, Ann Cooper, whom he married in 1703, died in March 1706, her only child having predeceased her; and on 1 May 1707 he married a second wife, Joan Winckley. This excellent woman, to become the foster-mother of Dr. Johnson, had been a servant in the household of William Robinson, in Market Street, a near neighbour of Michael Johnson's and father of Luke Robinson, the opulent mercer, whose daughter married Matthew Boulton. In the 1695 census she was described as "20 odd,"* so that she must have been some years over thirty when she married John Marklew, who was considerably her junior. They had two sons, John Marklew, baptized 15 February 1707/8, and Samuel Marklew, baptized 8 June 1712.

There seems no room for doubt that Johnson's foster-brother was their elder son, John Marklew. It is a little surprising to find that he was eighteen months older than the lexicographer, but Mrs. Marklew must have suckled her first baby for a long time.†

Mrs. Johnson used to visit her infant every day in George Lane, 400 yards distant, and go different ways‡ so as to escape the ridicule of her neighbours, who evidently had not a very delicate humour. To make sure that Mrs. Marklew was not neglectful, she would sometimes leave behind her fan or her glove, as an excuse for returning un-

* See *post*, p. 90.

† Dr. Ballantyne (see *post*, p. 142) tells me that Jewish women used to suckle their children for two and even three years, and that our own working class women will occasionally keep their children at the breast for at least eighteen months, in the hope of preventing conception.

‡ Her alternative routes were, no doubt, Tamworth Street and Lombard Street.

expectedly ; but the foster-mother stood the test successfully. Little Samuel was afflicted with scrofulous sores, which Dr. Swynfen afterwards told him came from

the bad humours of the nurse, whose son had the same distemper, and was likewise short-sighted, but both in a less degree.*

John Marklew died in 1716 or 1717. His little property he left on trust to James Robinson, of Lichfield, mercer, who was to sell it and with the proceeds discharge the mortgage thereof made to William Robinson, of the New Inn Square, gentleman, together with all other sums due by him to the said William Robinson. James and William Robinson were evidently the brothers of Luke Robinson, and sons of his wife's old master.†

Mrs. Joan Marklew survived until 1746, dying in George Lane, no doubt in the very house in which she had nursed "the infant Samuel." She left the two houses where she dwelt to her younger son Samuel, with all her household goods ; and to her son John two guineas for a new suit, enjoining Samuel to buy clothes for him yearly. It is clear that John Marklew, even if he was in some ways less affected by his mother's "bad humours" than was his distinguished foster-brother, must have been incapacitated from earning his own living. To her granddaughter Mary Marklew, no doubt a child of Samuel, she bequeathed a seven-and-twenty piece of gold and her gold ring.‡

Fifty-eight years after his nursing, in 1767, Johnson sought out Mrs. Marklew's house in George Lane, and found her son, his foster-brother, reading a large Bible that she had bought some time before her death.§ As a young boy Johnson used to call at the Marklews'

* Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 130-1.

† See *post*, p. 90. As explained in *The Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 212, Luke Robinson married Dorothy, dau. and coheir of John Babington. From a pedigree of Babington in Howard and Crisp's *Visitation of England and Wales*, "Notes," VIII., 53-4, I learn that the marriage took place 17 May 1724. Her sister, Mary Babington, was the first wife of Theophilus Levett (see *post*, p. 176 ; and IV., Appendix L).

‡ See account of Marklew *alias* Bellison family, *post*, IV., Appendix D. Dr. Richard Wright, of Lichfield, who edited Johnson's *Annals* in 1805, says in a footnote (p. 10) that "the name of Marklew, alias Bellison, is yet common in Lichfield, and is usually so distinguished."

§ Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 131-2.

and eat the fruit that grew plentifully in the garden.* Visiting Lichfield in August, 1769, he was very angry to find that the corporation had "cut down the trees in George Lane"†—the trees, that is, which grew in the roadway.

In ten weeks, which would be about the end of November, poor Samuel was taken back to his parents, "a poor, diseased infant, almost blind." His aunt, Mrs. Nathaniel Ford, sister to that Gregory Hickman who befriended him in early life, once frankly told him "that she would not have picked such a poor creature up in the street." And Dr. Swynfen, more professionally, said "that he never knew any child reared with so much difficulty." Mrs. Johnson, modest for once, thought that his diseases were "derived from her family."‡

A cousin was born to little Samuel while he was at Mrs. Marklew's. Mrs. Harrison,§ who probably lived quite close to the Johnsons, baptized her youngest child, Phœbe, at St. Mary's Church, on 8 November 1709. This was the Phœbe who afterwards married Benjamin Herne,|| and had a lunatic daughter Elizabeth, whom Johnson very generously helped to support during the later years of his life, and towards whose maintenance he bequeathed £100 in his will.¶

In 1710 appeared a small tract entitled *The Christian Synagogue : or the Original Use and Benefit of Parochial Churches*, a sermon preached that year at Birmingham by William Binckes,** Dean of Lichfield, the title page of which informs us that it was "printed for Jonah

* Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 130.

† *Letters of Samuel Johnson*, ed. Birkbeck Hill, I., 154-5.

‡ Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 131-2.

§ See *ante*, p. 38.

|| I have found in Phillimore's *Derbyshire Marriages*, vol. XIV., p. 154, that they were married at South Wingfield in April 1731 :—"Mr. Benjamin Herne and Mrs. Phœbe Harrison, both of Birmingham." At p. 113 it is explained that this register is interesting and important "by reason of the great number of marriages of couples from neighbouring parishes and even from distant ones." The Rev. Francis Hill, incumbent for over 30 years until his death in 1733, appears to have touted for "clandestine" marriages, so perhaps this was one.

¶ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 179-81; *Johnsonian Gleanings*, *ante*, II., 52.

** William Binckes, Dean of Lichfield, died 19 June 1712 (*Harleian Society*, "Musgrave's Obituary").

Bowyer, at the Rose in Ludgate St. ; and Michael Johnson, Bookseller in Lichfield."*

At an age to which his faintest recollections did not reach, in 1710 or 1711, he was taken by his mother to Trysull, beyond Wolverhampton, and some twenty miles from Lichfield, to stay with her cousin Elizabeth, the middle-aged widow of Robert Harriotts. Mrs. Harriotts was the only surviving child † of William Barnesley, of Trysull, who, as we have already seen, married Mrs. Johnson's aunt, Elizabeth Ford, in 1657.‡ Having inherited her father's property, she lived at the Manor House, amid evidences of prosperity which seem only to have exasperated poor Michael Johnson. As his son tells us in the "Annals," they "never had much kindness for each other"; partly because "he had none so high to whom he could send any of his family"; those of his relatives "indeed whom we knew of were much lower than" Mrs. Johnson's. The great Mrs. Harriotts evidently used to stay with the Johnsons at Lichfield. Michael, partly no doubt by his being busy with his trade and partly no doubt by design

saw her seldom himself, and willingly disgusted her, by sending his horses from home on Sunday; which she considered, and with reason, as a breach of duty.

Mr. and Mrs. Michael's contempt for each other's relatives began very early in their married life, but as Michael "was little at home, it had not much effect . . ."§

It is probable that Mrs. Johnson had written to her cousin to tell her about little Samuel's eyes, and that Mrs. Harriotts had thereupon invited her to bring the child to Trysull, where she could get good medical advice. At any rate, the main object of the visit seems to

* *Notes and Queries*, 3rd Series, IV., 388; Joseph Hill's *Bookmakers of Old Birmingham*, p. 49. The sermon was preached "at a General Meeting of the Commissioners appointed for the Building an Additional Parochial Church in Birmingham, which, by Virtue of a Late Act of Parliament, is to be called St. Philip's Church." The land for St. Philip's Church was given about 1698 by Robert Phillips [1639-1701], of Newton Regis, High Sheriff of Warwickshire in 1680, uncle of Ambrose Philips, the poet; its name was a compliment to his generosity.

† From "Staffordshire Pedigrees" (*Harleian Society*, vol. 63), p. 18, I learn that Thomas Barnesley [1658-67], the eldest son, was "drowned about 1668."

‡ See *ante*, p. 32.

§ Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 132; *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 143.

have been that the boy's eyes should be examined by Dr. Thomas Attwood, of Worcester, a young Roman Catholic physician of a very good local stock, whose mother was a grandchild of the second Lord Petre. From Johnson's "Annals" we gather that Dr. Attwood, who at the time was some thirty years old, specialized as an oculist; and we may feel pretty sure that Mrs. Harriotts, and not Mrs. Johnson, paid his fee. We do not know whether any good resulted from the examination, or whether Dr. Attwood, who did not die until 1765, afterwards realized the identity of this early patient.*

The Manor House at Trysull, which is the earliest house, after his birthplace, that we can connect with Johnson, still stands near Trysull church. In its plan it is scarcely altered since the day when Johnson stayed there, for all the rooms mentioned in William Barnesley's will in 1684, in the inventory of Mrs. Barnesley's goods in 1697, as well as in the will of Mrs. Harriotts in 1726, accord perfectly with the rooms as they are to-day. But, unfortunately, its original brick and stone exterior has been relentlessly covered over with stucco, though the date of 1663, incised in the beam over the porch, still remains as a memorial of Johnson's great-uncle.† This visit to Trysull would give Mrs. Johnson a chance of seeing her sister Mrs. Hardwicke, who, with her husband and three children, was living at Great Moor, Pattingham, only three or four miles away.‡

Few children of the period, living far away in the country, can have visited London at so early an age as Samuel Johnson. In the March of 1712, on the advice of Sir John Floyer,§ he was taken by his mother, then pregnant with Nathaniel,|| to London, that he might benefit by what the superstitious of the day regarded as the healing power of the royal touch. Though he was but thirty months old, he "always retained some memory of this journey"—the earliest memory of his of which we know. Queen Anne made an impression on him, for he told Mrs. Thrale that he had "a confused, but somehow a sort of solemn recollection of a lady in diamonds, and a long black hood."¶ He also remembered a boy crying at the Palace on this occasion.**

* *Johnsonian Gleanings*, ante, I., 24; Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 132.

† *Johnsonian Gleanings*, ante, I., 23-4.

‡ See ante, p. 40.

§ See post, p. 66.

|| See post, p. 71.

¶ *Piozzi's Anecdotes of the late Samuel Johnson, LL.D.*, 2nd ed. 1786, p. 10.

** Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 134.

As to all others whom she "touched," the Queen presented to him the usual amulet of an angel of gold, with the impress of St. Michael the archangel on the one side, and a ship under full sail on the other.*

On the obverse was the inscription *Soli Deo Gloria*, and on the reverse *Anna D.G. Br. F.D. Reg.* That Johnson himself always retained a good measure of superstition is evident from the fact that he continued to wear this piece of gold suspended round his neck by a ribbon, where the Queen had placed it. On his death it passed into the possession of his old friend and schoolfellow, Dr. Taylor of Ashburne,† who by his will in 1787 bequeathed it to the Duke of Devonshire‡—that fifth Duke whom Johnson, only three months before his death, had visited at Chatsworth.§

While in London on this occasion, his mother stayed "at Nicholson's, the famous bookseller, in Little Britain,"|| off Aldersgate Street. Little Britain at that date was the equivalent of what Paternoster Row is to-day¶—the very heart of the London bookselling trade. And John Nicholson, of the King's Arms—the sign of his shop—was one of its leading figures, with whom Michael Johnson, no doubt, had had business dealings. John Dunton "ever found him a very honest man," though apparently thinking him to shine more at "projection" than achievement.**

Many years afterwards Johnson was asked on which side of John Nicholson's shop the counter was, and he recollected clearly that it was "on the left from the entrance." He also remembered that he once slipped his leg into a hole in the floor in a "little dark room behind the kitchen," where the jack-weight fell through. Less confidently, for he thought that he might have heard it mentioned since, he remembered playing with a string and a bell, which his cousin Isaac Johnson†† gave him; "and that there was a cat

* Hawkins's *Life of Johnson*, 1787, p. 4.

† See *post*, p. 124.

‡ *Life of Dr. John Taylor of Ashburne*, by Thomas Taylor, M.A., F.S.A., p. 76.

§ Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, IV., 357, 367.

|| Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 133-4.

¶ *Notes on St. Botolph without Aldersgate*, by John Staples, F.S.A., 1881, p. 49.

** *Johnsonian Gleanings*, ante, I., 3.

†† The identity of this Isaac Johnson has not been discovered, but he may have been a son of Andrew Johnson by Sarah Fisher his wife (see ante, p. 18), who had relatives christened Isaac (*Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 224).

with a white collar, and a dog, called Chops, that leaped over a stick."*

There is another circumstance of interest in connexion with this London visit. Mrs. Johnson's aunt, Mary Ford, who had married George Jesson, of West Bromwich, in 1643,[†] had a fourth and youngest son Cornelius Jesson, born in 1655, who settled in London in early life, where he was at first a tallow-chandler and afterwards a member of the Ironmongers' Company, to which he was admitted in 1693.[‡] In 1703, Cornelius Jesson, citizen and ironmonger of London, was elected Steward of Christ's Hospital, out of sixteen candidates, at a salary of £60 a year. The Steward's post was no sinecure, for in addition to being in charge of the children out of school hours, in the halls, wards and playgrounds, he had the added responsibility of supervising all the clothing and provisions. So capably did Cornelius discharge his duties that in 1707 he was voted a gratuity of £40, as a "just and faithful servant and one that deserves favour and encouragement." Later in the year, on his own application, he was awarded the gratuity of £20 a year that his predecessor had enjoyed.§

* Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 134.

† See *ante*, p. 32.

‡ On 3 May 1690 Cornelius Jesson was commissioned as an ensign in the City of London Militia (*Historical MSS. Commission*, 13th Report, Appendix V., p. 58).

§ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 136. The Rev. Thomas Jesson, Vicar of Hucclecote, Gloucester, has the following letter from Cornelius:—"London, 28th Dec^b 1704. Loveing Brother, By Mr. Pemberton I understand you desired Mr. Nicholas Bakewell to wright to mee abought 14 days senc—which if heeded I never Receaved it: So y^t I am in y^e dark as to any thing of it but Mr. Pemberton sayes y^t hee beleves it was to desire mee to give you my order to pay to Mr. John Pemberton five hundred and fifty pounds and to take up my bond which which [*sic*] Mr. Pemberton hath: and accordingly I have given Mr. John Pemberton a bill upon you for y^t sum which when payd Mr. John Pembertons Receate shall be your discharg for y^e same: and when y^t is dun Any thing els that you shall desire of mee fting for mee your Brother to do shall be as redely Cumplied with as if I weare with you to do it: for I do not desire any thing but what is Just and right and every thing like A Brother being as well ashured y^t you are y^e same [?" *This omitted*] is all but true love to your Selfe and Sister and all Coosens from, Your ever Loveing Brother, CORNS: JESSON. When you wright to mee, Pray direct to Corns. Jesson, Steward of Christ Hospital, London. my humble sirvis to Coosen W^m Brett and all his" [ends]. This letter is addressed, "For Mr. Nicholas Bakewell, Ironmonger In Birmingham," but apparently it was written to the writer's elder and only surviving brother, John Jesson [1651-1712], who married Elizabeth Brett in 1675 (*Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, Pedigree XXIX). The Rev. Thomas Jesson has the original indenture of apprenticeship of this John Jesson, son of George Jesson, of West Bromwich, co. Staff, yeoman, dated 1 May 18 Charles II [1666], to John Granger, of Wolverhampton, baker, for 7 years. The wits. were William Barnesley and Robert Granger.

Now Christ's Hospital is but a stone's throw from Little Britain, and we can scarcely doubt that, when Mrs. Johnson stayed at John Nicholson's, she would step round the corner to call on her excellent cousin, whom she probably had not seen for many years. As an old inhabitant of London he would be invaluable for piloting her about the streets and showing her the sights. And when she went out to make her modest purchases—when she bought her little son the small silver cup and spoon, marked "SAM. I." to be distinguishable from her own silver, together with the two teaspoons for herself, the only ones she possessed till Samuel was grown up ; or the "speckled linen frock" that he afterwards knew as his "London frock"*—her cousin's knowledge of the shops would be most useful. Possibly, however, Mrs. Johnson herself knew London, for in 1773, at Dunvegan Castle, Skye, the Doctor told Boswell that "in the last age, *when my mother lived in London*, there were two sets of people, those who gave the wall, and those who took it ; the peaceable and the quarrelsome."† This, perhaps, may only refer to the stay in London in 1712 : if she had really lived there at some time, while she was unmarried, no satisfactory explanation presents itself of the circumstances which caused her to do so. Whether or not it was her first sight of London, there seems no doubt that it must have been her last.

Mrs. Johnson and Samuel made the journey to London in the stage-coach, where they were "troublesome to the passengers," who did not relish, any more than passengers would do to-day, a baby who was actually sick in their midst. There seem to have been but two other females in the coach ; one had the temerity to fondle him, but the other was frankly disgusted. As Johnson himself afterwards remarked, travelling in a stage-coach in those days was often unpleasant even for people of much higher rank than themselves.‡ And at that time it took almost the whole of three days from Birmingham to London : towards the end of Johnson's life the time for the journey had been reduced to thirteen hours.§

* Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 134-5.

† Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, V., 230 ; I., 110.

‡ Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 134-5.

§ In 1691 a stage-coach left the Reindeer Inn in Birmingham every Monday morning at six o'clock, going through Warwick and Banbury, and reaching the Bell Inn, in West Smithfield, on Wednesday : the return journey occupied from Thursday to

Their return journey was made "in the waggon," according to Mrs. Johnson because Samuel's cough was so violent. But looking back he thought that she was largely influenced by the desire—a very natural one in her case—to save a few shillings, "for she, not having been accustomed to money, was afraid of such expenses as now seem very small." Very wisely she had sewed up a couple of guineas in her petticoat, so that if she were robbed of her loose money she would not be penniless.* The stage-waggon was the poor man's coach, and travellers in it were despised by everyone, more especially by the inn-keepers, who would rarely admit them for bed or refreshment.†

It certainly seems extraordinary now, in an age when superstition has had to take such a different form, that there should have been so unquestioning a belief in the efficacy of the royal touch as to induce comparatively poor people to make such a long, trying, and expensive journey to London and back for the sole purpose of obtaining it. But, as Boswell tells us, Michael Johnson was a zealous royalist who

retained his attachment to the unfortunate house of Stuart, though he reconciled himself, by casuistical arguments of expediency and necessity, to take the oaths imposed by the prevailing power.‡

Jacobites, according to Hawkins, were numerous in Staffordshire,§ so perhaps belief in the healing power of royal hands was even more prevalent there than elsewhere. On 31 August 1687, James II, in his tour through England, came to Lichfield, and next morning, in the middle choir of the Cathedral, "touched divers persons that had the evil"—those who could get the necessary certificate.|| We can scarcely doubt that Michael Johnson was present at this ceremony,

Saturday (*Book Makers of Old Birmingham*, by Joseph Hill, p. 33). In 1731 the journey took two and a half days; in 1745, two days, "if the roads permitted"; in 1782, thirteen hours (*The Lloyds of Birmingham*, by Samuel Lloyd, 1907, p. 47).

* Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 134-5.

† *Stage-Coach and Mail in Days of Yore*, by Charles G. Harper, 1903, I., 103-145.

‡ Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 37; and *post*, pp. 67, 165.

§ Hawkins's *Life of Johnson*, 1787, p. 3.

|| Harwood's *Lichfield*, pp. 308-9. In the register of Alrewas, five miles from Lichfield, is the following entry, under 1767:—"Edward Hall, who was touched and cured by his majesty king Charles the Second for the king's evil, was buried January 19th, aged 110 years" (Shaw's *Staffordshire*, I., 140).

especially if he could claim the monarch's old and trusted nurse as a connexion ;* and it may well have been his memory of it that moved him to send little Samuel to London.

It may also be regarded as a matter for surprise that Sir John Floyer, one of the most original physicians of his time—a man with much independence of thought and full of the spirit of research†—should share the popular superstition. But an excellent authority tells us that everyone yielded to it, from the highest to the lowest, and from the most ignorant to the most enlightened men of the day.‡ So that we cannot blame Sir John Floyer for his belief, however contrary it seems to the principles that ordinarily guided him. And it is not to be wondered at that Michael Johnson, who had published a book for Sir John as far back as 1687,§ should feel his faith much reinforced when it received the highest scientific sanction from such an eminent physician.

There is no evidence that faith was rewarded in this instance, for the scrofulous affection that induced the journey remained, or its results remained, with Johnson to the end of his days, not only in the form of constant mental and physical disorders, but also in that disfigurement of face which made his features appear much more harsh and rugged than nature had really fashioned them, as well as in impaired hearing and the virtual loss of sight in his left eye. Murphy tells us that he was afterwards “ cut ” for the complaint, and that the operation still further seamed and disfigured the lower parts of his face.||

On 19 July 1712 Michael Johnson was elected a magistrate of

* See *ante*, p. 22.

† See his life in *Dict. Nat. Biog.* Born in 1649, he spent twelve years in Oxford after taking his degree there, but practised in Lichfield from then until his death in 1734.

‡ See *Archæological Journal*, vol. X, 1853, pp. 187-211, where is a long article entitled “ On the Cure of Scrofulous Diseases attributed to the Royal Touch,” by Edward Law Hussey, surgeon to the Radcliffe Infirmary, Oxford. Mr. Hussey, following Nichols (*Literary Anecdotes*, II., 502), says that Johnson was among the 200 persons touched by Queen Anne on 30 Mch. 1714. But this is out of the question—he was touched in 1712, before his brother Nathaniel's birth.

§ See *ante*, p. 10.

|| Murphy's *Essay on the Life and Genius of Dr. Johnson*, 1792, p. 8; Hawkins's *Life of Johnson*, 1787, pp. 4-5; Thomas Tyers's “ Biographical Sketch ” (*Birkbeck Hill's Johnsonian Miscellanies*, II., 338); Piozzi's *Anecdotes of the late Samuel Johnson*, 2nd ed., 1786, p. 9; Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 41-2.

Lichfield, and six days later took the necessary oath of allegiance,* swallowing his Jacobite sympathies for the moment. Dr. Johnson did not attempt to defend this sacrifice of principle for interest—it scarcely needs defence in the eyes of reasonable people, when life, to all but cranks, is a series of compromises—but told Boswell that his father “was to settle *that* with himself.”† He himself inherited Michael’s sympathy for the Stuarts, and was further encouraged in the same direction by Hunter,‡ when he came under that awe-inspiring pedagogue’s influence at the Grammar School.§

It was in this same year 1712, if his memory did not play him false, that he was first told by his mother of a future existence. When he was in bed with her one morning she endeavoured to give him some rudimentary conception of the difference between the places called Heaven and Hell, and when he was dressed she bade him repeat his lesson in theological geography to their man-servant, Thomas Jackson. Johnson remembered the incident clearly, but not that the actual exposition had affected his imagination much.||

Boswell, while warning us against paying “too much attention to incidents which the credulous relate with eager satisfaction,” yet mentions “a traditional story of the infant Hercules of toryism, so curiously characteristick” that he cannot withhold it. He then proceeds to quote a letter “from Miss Mary Adye, of Lichfield” :—

When Dr. Sacheverel was at Lichfield, Johnson was not quite three years old. My grandfather Hammond observed him at the cathedral perched upon his father’s shoulders, listening and gaping at the much celebrated preacher. Mr. Hammond asked Mr. Johnson how he could possibly think of bringing such an infant to church, and in the midst of so great a croud. He answered, because it was impossible to keep him at home ; for, young as he was, he believed he had caught the publick spirit and zeal for Sacheverel, and would have staid for ever in the church, satisfied with beholding him.¶

* See *ante*, p. 65, and *post*, p. 165.

† Birkbeck Hill’s *Boswell*, II., 322.

‡ See *post*, p. 110.

§ “My grandfather was a Jacobite, and Sam. Johnson had imbibed his master’s absurd zeal for the forfeit rights of the house of Stuart ; and this, though his father had very loyal principles ; but the anxiety attendant on penurious circumstances, probably left old Johnson little leisure or inclination to talk on political subjects” (*Anna Seward’s Poetical Works*, ed. Walter Scott, vol. I., p. lxx.). Michael’s “loyalty” seems to have been quite superficial.

|| Birkbeck Hill’s *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 135 ; Piozzi’s *Anecdotes of the late Samuel Johnson*, 2nd ed., 1786, p. 29 ; Birkbeck Hill’s *Boswell*, I., 38.

¶ Birkbeck Hill’s *Boswell*, I., 38-9.

Taking Miss Adey's story as it stands, the incident must have occurred about August 1712. But Croker pointed out that Sacheverell's only recorded visit to Lichfield was on 16 June 1710, when he was under a three-years interdict from preaching which was not removed until March 1713. On this occasion in 1710, when he was on his way to take up the living of Aston, in Shropshire, to which he had been presented during his trial, and making quite a triumphal progress through the midland counties, he was received by the Corporation of Lichfield and presented with three dozen of wine.* On the strength of these stern facts Croker says that "the gossiping anecdotes of the Lichfield ladies are all apochryphal."

Croker's note—though he was in some ways the shrewdest of Johnsonian editors—has really no weight, however. It has been repeated by succeeding editors, who, although trying to evade the consequences of its argument, have not observed that it is founded on a fallacy. It is true, as Croker said, that "Sacheverell could not have preached at Lichfield while Johnson was under three years of age." But no one said that he did *preach* there: Miss Adey's story merely speaks of little Samuel, at the Cathedral, "listening and gaping at the much celebrated preacher." And he may have both gaped and listened, for Sacheverell was at full liberty to perform all clerical functions except preaching,† and, as a matter of fact, ladies especially used to crowd to churches where he read prayers, during his suspension.‡ Sacheverell's reception at Lichfield was so foolishly enthusiastic that even he, hardened though he was to popular plaudits, was made to feel "much uneasiness."§ Without a doubt Michael Johnson would join in the "mafficking," even if it involved taking with him a squalling infant who did not want to miss any of the fun.

* Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 39. The 16 June 1710 was a Friday.

† Hearne made a note in his diary on 23 March 1710, that on Tuesday Dr. Sacheverell was suspended from preaching for three years, but left free to exercise any other priestly offices (Hearne's Collections, *Oxford Historical Society*, VII., 364).

‡ *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, under Henry Sacheverell.

§ Writing to her brother Thomas Coke, from Melbourne, Derbyshire, on 8 July 1710, Elizabeth Coke remarks:—"My Lord Ferrers makes no small pains to be a very popular person. Six hogsheads of wine are sent to Chartley to entertain the Staffordshire gentlemen, who, 'tis said, he expects to come to make him their thankful acknowledgments for his great services to the Doctor [Sacheverell], who also himself, 'tis said, will be there. But they often say he comes, where he never has: though he was at Lichfield, and very foolish proceedings there was with him, which, 'tis said, was much

Miss Adey, unlike Miss Seward, has not an established reputation for romantic inaccuracy. She could not be unkindly ranked among the "literary ladies" of the period, and this is the only story that stands to her credit, so that we are not justified in dismissing it as untrue in substance. Her grandfather, Richard Hammond,* whom she gives as the witness of Johnson's early enthusiasm for Sacheverell, was an apothecary in Lichfield, some thirty-one years the senior of Johnson, who at his death in 1738 left two daughters, Felicia Hammond, who afterwards married Joseph Adey, town clerk of Lichfield from 1746 to 1764,† and Mary Hammond, in later years, as caustic "Moll Cobb," the friend of Johnson.‡ Miss Adey was not born until a few years after her grandfather's death, so cannot have got the story from him first hand.

In 1794 Miss Adey became the third wife of John Sneyd—Honora's cousin—and she died early in 1829.§ Charles Simpson, town clerk of Lichfield,|| who recollected her as Mrs. Sneyd, told Napier, before 1883, that the story did not rest on her authority alone, for he had heard it from the Rev. Henry White, Johnson's "rising strength of Lichfield,"¶

against his will, and gave him much uneasiness" (*Historical MSS. Commission*, 12th Report, Appendix III., p. 171).

* Richard Hammond was Junior Bailiff in 1722 and Senior Bailiff in 1730 (Harwood's *Lichfield*, p. 432). Concerning the Hammonds, see *Johnsonian Gleanings*, ante, I., 12-13. Richard Hammond seems to have been apprenticed to Richard Burnes, of Market Street, whose household thus appears in the Lichfield census of 1695 (see ante, p. 18):—"Rich^d Burnes, Gent., reputed 50^{li} p. ann., 33; Dorothy his wife, 22; Rich^d Hammond, App^r, 16; Sarah Barker, Serv^t, 19; W^m Cooke, Batchelor, 25."

† *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 212; and *post*, IV., Appendix H.

‡ Croker was told by Harwood that "Mrs. Cobb was the daughter of Mr. Hammond, an apothecary, and the widow of a mercer, who had retired from business, and resided at the Friary" (Croker's *Boswell*, new ed. 1890, p. 639). Anna Seward, in a letter dated August 1764, speaks of her mother having "had her friend Miss Hammond with her" (*Anna Seward's Works*, I., cxlii.). This must be Mary Hammond, who cannot therefore have married Thomas Cobb until she was 47 or more (see *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 229; and *Johnsonian Gleanings*, ante, I., 12-13). From Phillimore's *Derbyshire Marriages*, IV., 21, I learn that "Mr. Thomas Cobb and Mrs. Sarah Moore, both of Lichfield," were married at St. Alkmund's, Derby, on 29 Aug. 1722. Probably this was an earlier marriage of Mary Hammond's husband. Samuel, son of Thomas Cobb, of Lichfield, gent., matric. 14 Nov. 1748, aged 17, at Worcester College, Oxford, and took his B.A. in 1752 (*Foster's Alumni Oxonienses*).

§ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 212; and see *post*, IV., Appendix H.

|| See *post*, IV., Appendix J.

¶ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 246; and *Johnsonian Gleanings*, ante, I., 11; II., 84-5.

who got it direct "from the Doctor himself"—the story, that is, "which lived in the family."* There is no record of Johnson ever having mentioned Sacheverell in a way which would suggest personal knowledge ; yet had the incident occurred in 1713 it would, as we have already seen, have been well within his period of recollection.† The "Annals," most unfortunately, are not existing for some years after 1712, or they might have settled a question that has caused much controversy.

It may safely be said that, if Johnson really was taken to hear Sacheverell, it must have been either in 1710 or 1711, when he was too young to carry any recollection of it ; or during the period for which his "Annals" are missing. Had it been early in 1712, he would have remembered and recorded it in his "Annals." I am inclined to think that the incident, if it has a real foundation in fact, can safely be ascribed to the period before memories begin to be stored, and Henry White's evidence indeed suggests that Johnson himself did not recollect it, but only what his family had told him about it. On this supposition it is not necessary to seek for an occasion other than that in June 1710, for which there is historical evidence. The infant's supposed "publick spirit and zeal for Sacheverell"‡ may be put down to the parent's fondness or the narrator's imagination.

It is to be remarked that Sacheverell had personal friends at Lichfield. With Edward Wilson, who was sheriff of the city in 1667, junior bailiff in 1671, senior bailiff in 1677 and 1684, mayor in 1687, and senior bailiff again in 1688 and 1693, he had been intimate for a good many years ; and at a later date, in June 1716, he married Wilson's sister Mary, widow of George Sacheverell, of Callow, in Derbyshire. Through this marriage he became connected with several well-known Lichfield families. For his wife's cousin, Mary Bromley, married Charles Howard, of Lichfield, in 1703, and became the grandmother of Erasmus Darwin's first wife ; and when Charles Howard died, in November 1717, his widow had as her co-executrix "Mrs. Mary Sacheverell, wife of the Revd. Doctor Henry Sacheverell, Rector of St. Andrew's, Holborn, in London." In 1722 Mrs. Howard became

* Napier's *Boswell*, I., pp. xx, 14.

† See *ante*, p. 61.

‡ See *ante*, p. 67.

the second wife of John Martin, a Lichfield apothecary, elder brother of Michael Johnson's old apprentice, Simon Martin.*

Nathaniel, the younger son of Michael and Sarah Johnson, was baptized at St. Mary's church on 14 October 1712, so that, presuming his birth to have occurred very shortly before, his mother was not far advanced in pregnancy on her journey to London in the preceding March, when, as Johnson states, she had concealed her condition "that she might not be hindered from the journey."† Indeed, the very fact of successful concealment is almost proof of this. Samuel, now aged a few weeks over three years, appreciated all the circumstances of his brother's christening, and remembered them accordingly. He told Mrs. Thrale that

his mother taught him to spell and pronounce the words *little Natty*, syllable by syllable, making him say it over in the evening to her husband and his guests ;

a recollection, by the way, which does not suggest any great precocity on the child's part. The inclination on the part of his father to make his children "show off" before visitors disgusted him intensely even at that age. He grew to loathe his father's caresses, for he knew that they were the prelude to a forced display of his childish abilities ; and when neighbours came to visit them he would run out and climb up a tree, where he was secure against the degradation of being exhibited as a prodigy of early understanding—"teized with awkward fondness," "as a little boy's dog," that he might, as his father thought, "divert

* See *post*, IV, Appendix G ; and *ante*, p. 13. John Martin was baptized at St. Mary's, Lichfield, on 21 Oct. 1674. From the Lichfield census of 1695 (see *ante*, p. 18), it appears that he was apprenticed to a Boylston. A household in Bird Street is thus enumerated :—"Rhoda Boylston, widd., 67 ; Grace Boylston, 19, Ann Boylston, 14, spinsters ; Rhoda Holdback, Spinster, 34 ; Tho: Allott, 20, *John Martin*, 20, Henry Boylston, 16, App^rntices ; Jane Parkes, Serv^t maid, 30." His fellow-apprentice, Henry Boylston, was married 11 June 1706, at St. Mary's, Lichfield, to Ann (bapt. there 6 Apl. 1686), daughter of Edmund Hector the elder, and aunt of Johnson's school-fellow Edmund Hector (Beriah Botfield's *Stemmata Botteviliana*, 1858, p. 155). Writing to Edmund Hector, on 8 Dec. 1765, Johnson speaks of the death of Lewis Paul (on 25 Apl. 1759), and then asks :—"And to go backwarder, what was the fate of poor George Brylston ?" (*Letters of Samuel Johnson*, ed. Birkbeck Hill, I., 125). This is evidently a mis-reading of "Boylston," for George Boylston was a son of Henry's and so a cousin of Hector's (*Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 152). Dr. Hill in a footnote lamely remarks that "of 'poor George Brylston' and his fate nothing, I fear, can ever be known" ; but there is no reason for such despondency.

† Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 134.

a company " which was really reduced to utter boredom. This treatment led him strongly to condemn late marriages ; an old man's child, he said, became the plaything of dotage. In after life he used sometimes to cause deep offence by refusing to listen to recitations by precocious children ;* a rule of conduct which, if more generally observed, might make for righteousness.

To this same period, when he was three years old, is attributed the composition of his first piece of verse—that dealing with the duckling he trod on and killed. This little story is best investigated on the basis of the original form in which it appeared in Boswell's note-book :—

This† Miss Porter told me in his presence at Litchfield Monday 25 March 1776. At the same time she told me that his mother told her that when he was in petticoats he was walking by his father's side and carelessly trode upon a duck, one of thirteen, and killed it. So then this duck it was said to him must be buried, and he must make an epitaph for it. Upon which he made these lines

Under this stone lyes Mr. Duck
Whom Samuel Johnson trode on
He might have liv'd if he had luck,
But then he'd been an odd one.

Dr. Johnson said that his Father made one half of this epitaph. That he was a foolish old man, that is to say was foolish in talking of his children. But I trust to his mother's relation of what happened in his childhood rather than to his own recollection ; and Miss Porter assured him in my presence upon his mother's authority that he had made this epitaph himself.

[*marginal note*] But he assures me 21 Sept. 1777 that he remembers his Father's making it. So I am convinced.‡

It will be noticed that, when Boswell came to present this tale to the public, in the *Life*, he made various alterations, both in the verse itself and in relating the circumstances of its composition. He followed Hawkins, and the despised Anna Seward—who disputed with Boswell as to whether Johnson or his father had written it§—in specifying the poet's age as three years, and in reducing the number

* Piozzi's *Anecdotes of the late Samuel Johnson*, 2nd ed. 1786, pp. 10-12.

† The incident of repeating the Collect ; see *post*, p. 74.

‡ Adam's *Facsimile of Boswell's Notebook*, 1919. I am much indebted to Mr. R. B. Adam for giving me one of the 50 copies of this facsimile of one of Boswell's notebooks in his great Johnsonian collection at Buffalo, and for allowing me to quote it as I wished.

§ Nichols's *Literary Illustrations*, VII., 324, 360-1.

of ducklings from thirteen to eleven;* as well as in approximating the verse very closely to Hawkins's version of it, which was as follows :—

Here lies good Master Duck,
That Samuel Johnson trod on,
If't had liv'd 'twould have been good luck,
For then there'd been an odd one.†

Boswell's final version of it, naturally the most familiar to us now, is very little different :—

Here lies good master duck,
Whom Samuel Johnson trod on ;
If it had liv'd, it had been *good luck*,
For then we'd had an *odd one*.‡

Mrs. Piozzi's version, which was the first put before the public, opens very weakly :—

Here lies poor duck
That Samuel Johnson trod on ;
If it had liv'd it had been good luck
For it would have been an odd one.§

It is difficult to see why Boswell should have surrendered to Hawkins and Mrs. Piozzi by altering the verse as he apparently received it direct from Lucy Porter in Johnson's presence ; and by making the ducklings fewer in number. The whole thing is almost unworthy of serious consideration except for the interest of studying Boswell's methods. It is curious that he did not print the tale on his own responsibility, but gave references in a footnote to Mrs. Piozzi and Hawkins ; although he had it with other first-hand material in his own note-book. And in printing it he refuted Miss Porter's ascription of the authorship by stating that Johnson "assured me, that his father made the verses, and wished to pass them for his child's."|| Yet it seems, from Boswell's note-book, that Johnson admitted being responsible for half the epitaph—of course the first half.

Mrs. Piozzi describes the verse as "a striking example of early

* Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 40. † Hawkins's *Life of Johnson*, 1787, p. 6.

‡ Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 40.

§ Piozzi's *Anecdotes of the late Samuel Johnson*, 2nd ed. 1786, p. 11.

|| Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 40.

expansion of mind, and knowledge of language ";* and Miss Seward, with characteristic exuberance, sees in it "the seeds . . . of that poetick talent which afterwards bore such rich and plentiful fruits."† But to us it seems a clumsy and rather feeble bit of doggerel, which even as the work of a child of three—and Mrs. Piozzi says that the tragedy occurred when he was "five years old"—could probably be matched by the achievements of other less celebrated, if more objectionable, infant prodigies, though Boswell says its composition by so young a child would imply "an extension of its faculties by immediate inspiration."‡ The slovenly facility of the two concluding lines certainly suggests the hand of Michael Johnson.

To the petticoat period, too, Boswell attributes the following instance of the "almost incredible" power of Johnson's memory, which he heard related in the Doctor's presence at Lichfield, on 25 March 1776, by Lucy Porter, who had it direct from old Mrs. Johnson.§ After little Samuel had learned to read, his mother one morning handed him a prayer-book and told him that he must learn the collect for the day by heart. She then went upstairs, but before she had reached the second "flat" (as Boswell calls it in his original note||), she heard him following her, and when she asked him what was the matter he not only told her that he could already repeat it, but gave proof of his claim, though he had not had time to read it through more than twice.

It is natural for us now to picture Johnson's childhood as having been spent in the "old house" in the Market Place. But we must adjust our vision and see the Johnsons proudly occupying a brand-new house,¶ of which they no doubt felt very proud. It had considerably more accommodation than they themselves actually required, but with a servant,** perhaps an apprentice,†† and even a lodger,‡‡ the rooms may all have had occupants.

In the latter part of 1712, Michael Johnson was publisher of a

* Fiozzi's *Anecdotes of the late Samuel Johnson*, 2nd ed. 1786, p. 11.

† Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 40.

‡ *Ibid.*, loc. cit.

§ Adam's *Facsimile of Boswell's Notebook*.

|| *Ibid.* Boswell in this case has reproduced his rough notes almost word for word.

¶ See *ante*, p. 48.

** See *post*, p. 119, and *ante*, pp. 13, 67.

†† If Simon Martin had any successors; see *ante*, p. 13.

‡‡ Dr. Swynfen was one; see *ante*, p. 54.

sermon entitled *Evil Communications*, preached at Stafford on 7 August of that year by the Rev. Richard Bynns.*

* There is a copy in the Birthplace at Lichfield. The full title is, *Evil Communications, A Sermon Preach'd at the Assizes held at Stafford August the 7th 1712 Before the Honourable Mr. Justice Powel and Mr. Justice Dormer. By Ri. Bynns, D.D., Rector of St. Mary's in Stafford. Publish'd at the Request of the High-Sheriff, Gentlemen, and others that heard it. London: Printed for Michael Johnson in Litchfield, and Henry Norman in Stafford: And sold by John Morphew near Stationers Hall, 1712. Price Three-pence.* The Rev. Richard Bynns, D.D., Rector of St. Mary's, Stafford, and Prebendary of Lichfield, died in 1713 (Rupert Simms's *Bibliotheca Staffordiensis*).

CHAPTER IV

FROM PRIVATE TEACHERS TO LICHFIELD GRAMMAR
SCHOOL

1713-1719

His mother teaches him to read—Dame Oliver, his first school-mistress, the widow of a cobbler—Her school in Dam Street—He kicks her when she follows him home—Tom Browne, ex-cobbler, his first school-master, who dedicated a spelling book “to the Universe”—Tom Browne’s death : his house and its contents—Partial collapse of St. Mary’s spire on Easter Sunday—Decision to rebuild church—Congregation emigrates to St. John’s Hospital—Young Samuel takes opportunity to cease church attendance—Sunday a miserable day for him—Michael Johnson visits Trentham—The Rev. George Plaxton’s tribute to him—Plaxton’s satirical humour—Lord Gower—Samuel enters Lichfield Grammar School—Mr. Hawkins, his first Latin master—Schoolbooks on which his mind was nourished—Curriculum of the lower school—His mother encourages him in his lessons—Cousin Tom Johnson comes to live with them—Identity of Mr. Hawkins : his long record as under-master—Samuel’s pleasant relations with Mr. Hawkins—Reads “Hamlet” in the kitchen—Michael Johnson’s parchment manufactory—His indictment at Lichfield Quarter Sessions for trading as a tanner—True bill returned against him—Trial postponed, and case referred to petty jury—Simon Bibb and his letter—Michael Johnson elected Junior Bailiff of Lichfield—Lord and Lady Knaresborough’s Johnsonian associations—Michael’s autograph defence : an interesting document—Trade with Ireland and Scotland—Formal brief for the defence : a reasoned case—The parchment manufacture and its effects on Michael’s fortunes—The “Parchment House” by Stowe Pool—Michael’s auction sale at Sidbury, and his frequent journeys about the Midlands—A very varied “bookseller’s” business—Michael’s diligence, and the reasons for its ill-reward—The Lichfield bookseller as a scholar and as a man—Dr. Johnson on a country bookseller’s troubles—William Innys, the London bookseller, and his kindness to Michael—Dr. Johnson’s legacy to Innys family—Michael Johnson’s melancholy,

and its physical causes—Mrs. Johnson's lack of sympathy with her husband—She irritates him with her complaints—Her narrow outlook and character—A devoted mother and amiable neighbour—Anticipates her son's love for tea—Mental capacities which Johnson may have inherited through his mother.

MRS. PIOZZI tells us that Johnson

first learned to read of his mother and her old maid Catharine, in whose lap he well remembered sitting while she explained to him the story of St. George and the Dragon.*

This cannot be true of their old maid Catherine Chambers, who was approximately the same age as Johnson himself and did not enter their service until about 1724.† But Mrs. Piozzi may have heard an old nurse mentioned in this connexion, and have concluded it was the faithful Catherine.

Boswell, on the other hand, states that Johnson

was first taught to read English by Dame Oliver, a widow, who kept a school for young children in Lichfield. He told me she could read the black letter,

and asked him to borrow a bible in that character from old Michael, for her edification.‡ Whence she derived her learning we know not. Her husband, Peter Oliver, had been a shoemaker in the Market Place at Lichfield, but he had died as far back as 1704, leaving his widow Anne with at least one daughter to bring up, and probably slender means on which to do it.§ She set up school in Dam Street, in a house only some 135 yards from Michael Johnson's, the site of which is now indicated by a tablet, and to this school little Samuel was sent, probably almost as soon as he could walk. Boswell, in connexion with this school, relates "a little instance of that jealous independence of spirit, and impetuosity of temper, which never

* Piozzi's *Anecdotes of the late Samuel Johnson*, 2nd ed. 1786, p. 15.

† Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 45; *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 242.

‡ Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 43.

§ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 246-7. At the time of the Lichfield census of 1695 (see *ante*, p. 18) Peter Oliver was a young man of 24, living with his mother in "Lumber [*sc.* Lombard] Street in St. Maryes Parish." The household was as follows:—"Jane (? Joan) Oliver, widd. 64; Eliz. her Daught^r, 18; Ann Oliver, Sojourn^r, 2; Matthew Cooper, Batchelor, 27; Peter Oliver, Batchelor, 24."

forsook him.”* In his note-book Boswell thus chronicled the incident :—

Dr. Percy told me that when he was at school he was so blind that he used to get down upon all four to find his way across the kennel.† That [Dame Oliver]‡ followed him one day when he was a child to take care he should get no harm, and he turned round and kicked her, (*) an early proof of his irritable and violent temper.

(*) *The Dr. gave me a more accurate edition of this story himself at Bath 1776. He said he had gone from school by himself for the first time as they had neglected to send for him in time. His dame slyly followed. He found his way very well ; but at turning the corner of a street having observed her he was so angry at being tended that he went back and beat her. This he was told by his mother. He had no recollection of it.*§

In the printed version Boswell slightly elaborates the story, but makes no material alteration. He omits the fact that the lady was Mrs. Oliver, simply alluding to her as “his schoolmistress.” The incident as related, and the fact that Johnson himself did not remember it at all, show that he must have been very young indeed when he went to Mrs. Oliver’s school, unless we attribute the necessity for an escort over such a short distance entirely to his blindness. He seems to have been on good terms with Mrs. Oliver, for she delighted him, just before he left for Oxford, by coming to bid him good-bye, bringing him, “in the simplicity of her kindness, a present of gingerbread,” and by saying “he was the best scholar she ever had.” As he smilingly told Boswell, “this was as high a proof of his merit as he could conceive.”|| The gingerbread was probably made by skilful hands, for when Mrs. Oliver died in 1731 she was carrying on a small business in confectioneries, and had apparently relinquished keeping school.¶

“His next instructor in English,” says Boswell, was a master, whom, when he spoke of him to me, he familiarly called Tom

* Birkbeck Hill’s *Boswell*, I., 39.

† “Kennel” = channel, the surface-water gutter in the street.

‡ Boswell left a blank space here, and then filled in the name afterwards.

§ Adam’s *Facsimile of Boswell’s Notebook*. In a letter to Boswell, dated 5 Mch. 1787, Bishop Percy relates this tale as one he had heard Dr. Johnson tell Anna Williams (Nichols’s *Literary Illustrations*, VII., 306).

|| Birkbeck Hill’s *Boswell*, I., 43.

¶ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson’s Ancestry*, pp. 246–7.

Brown, who, said he, "published a spelling-book, and dedicated it to the UNIVERSE ; but, I fear, no copy of it can now be had."*

Discovery of this spelling book has never gladdened the heart of any Johnsonian collector ; but the identity of Thomas Browne, to give him his full and accurate designation, has been fully revealed by research.† An old friend of the Olivers,‡ he was, like Mrs. Oliver's husband Peter, a shoemaker in Lichfield, but a shoemaker who defied an ancient saw by not sticking to his last. Like the Olivers, too, he had lived in Dam Street,§ where he owned a house which, when he left it, was divided into two tenements. Exactly when he exchanged the craftsman's delight in making boots, for the more intellectual delight of teaching, we do not know, but he was still shoemaking in 1703, when he helped to appraise the goods of Thomas Rutter, the Lichfield tanner, who made the deathbed appeal to Michael Johnson to continue business relations with his family.||

Probably it was during 1715-16 that Johnson enjoyed the instruction of Tom Browne, and as he seems to have entered Lichfield School at the beginning of 1717, he no doubt left Tom Browne's modest seminary at the end of 1716. The shoemaker-dominie did not long survive his distinguished pupil's departure. "Sick and weak," he made his last will on 25 July 1717 ; and three weeks later he died, and was buried at St. Michael's church.¶ His age would be about sixty. From his will, in which he is simply described as of Lichfield, schoolmaster, we learn that he owned two fields in Lichfield, called Gayfield and Linecroft, as well as his house in Dam Street. He

* Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 43.

† *Johnsonian Gleanings*, ante, I., 30-33.

‡ In 1701 he appraised the goods of Joan Oliver, widow, mother of Peter ; and in 1704 the goods of Peter himself (*Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 246).

§ In the Lichfield census of 1695 (see ante, p. 18), under Dam Street, his household is given as follows :—"Tho: Browne, 38 ; Peter, 6, Tho:, 4, sons ; Ann his Daught^r, 9 ; Rich^d Sleigh, Bachelor, 40 ; Ann Twigg, boarder, 15 ; Hannah Millward, serv^t, 20 odd." In his will he left a small annuity to his "loving sister Anne Twigg," who, I now conclude, was his wife's sister, and not, as I thought, his own. She evidently came, as a young girl, to help in the house when he was left a widower. His elder brother John, the baker, was living in Bore Street :—"John Browne, 40 ; Hannah his wife, 33 ; Sam^l, son, 3 ; Sarah, 8, Eliz., 4, Daught^{rs} ; Wm. Thacker, App^t, 16 ; Mary Hill, serv^t, 18."

¶ See ante, p. 27.

¶ *Johnsonian Gleanings*, ante, I., 31-2.

was probably fairly prosperous in a small way, and, of his two sons, one was established as a clockmaker in Birmingham, and the other as a currier at Abbots Bromley. The inventory of his household goods shows that his house had nine rooms, the "Kitchen," the "Pantrey," the "Seller," the "Shop," the "School," the "Street Chamber," the "Farr Street Chamber," the "Near Chamber Backwards," and the "Near Backroom." The shop did not contain any trade articles; and the whole furniture of the "School" consisted of "1 Table and old Chear," valued altogether at five shillings! Then there was "a parcell of old bookes," valued at a similar amount, in the kitchen.* With such an economy of apparatus are the minds of great men fashioned. Thomas Browne's signatures are neat and careful rather than scholarly; but he must have had a mind above his surroundings to consider the "UNIVERSE" the proper object of his dedication.

In 1716 occurred an incident which must have seemed quite memorable to the Johnson family. It certainly did to little Samuel, who ever afterwards associated it with one of the religious phases of his mind. On Easter Sunday of that year—on 1 April—a few pieces of stone and mortar fell from the spire on to the roof of St. Mary's church, right opposite the Johnsons' shop. The congregation, which no doubt included the Johnsons, who had a seating there,† were so alarmed that they thought the steeple itself was falling and made the quickest exit they could—through the windows, which afterwards had to be repaired. Their alarm was not mere unreasoning panic, for the spire had evidently, to their knowledge, been in an unsatisfactory condition, and the sudden clatter on the roof must have seemed like the realization of their worst fears. At any rate, three or four weeks later the parishioners held a meeting and decided to have the whole spire taken down, to the level of the battlements, the stone of which it was built to be used for repairing the main fabric. As a matter of fact, the whole church had practically to be rebuilt.‡

Now this physical happening synchronized with a growing distaste for religious observance on Samuel's part, or even for religion itself.

* *Johnsonian Gleanings*, ante, I., 32.

† Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 67.

‡ Harwood's *Lichfield*, p. 460; Shaw's *Staffordshire*, I., 335.

According to Mrs. Piozzi, "at the age of ten years his mind was disturbed by scruples of infidelity, which preyed upon his spirits, and made him very uneasy"; and she relates further details of this precocity in the matter of belief,* which Boswell is at some pains to ridicule.† When he became able to reason for himself, and "first began to think himself a clever fellow," he used to argue with his mother from a sceptic's point of view, for which he afterwards thought she ought to have whipped him.‡

However this may have been, St. Mary's church had to be shut up. The Corporation, in September, gave £100 towards the rebuilding and repairs;§ and took down their official seats and set them up in the chapel of St. John's Hospital. The remainder of the seats and pews were also carried to St. John's chapel.|| The Johnsons were thus compelled to attend the services at St. John's, which was over a quarter of a mile away, and Samuel, with his growing disinclination for public worship, took advantage of these disturbed conditions to escape church attendance altogether. Instead, he used to go out into the fields to read on a Sunday; where his "bad eyes" did not make him feel "awkward."¶ He did not return to the fold until the church was rebuilt.** Sunday seems always to have been a black day to him as a boy. His mother used to shut him up and make him read *The Whole Duty of Man*, from which he confessed to have derived no moral or intellectual benefit.†† As a boy, too, he either read or had read to him parts of the *Apochrypha*, but even in 1772 he confessed to having never read it through.‡‡

To this period belongs a letter which Boswell quoted "to show the high estimation in which the father of our great Moralist was held." Writing to a friend on 29 June 1716, the Rev. George Plaxton, a

* Piozzi's *Anecdotes of the late Samuel Johnson*, 2nd ed. 1786, pp. 17-18.

† Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 68-9.

‡ *Ibid.*, II., 14.

§ Harwood's *Lichfield*, p. 397.

|| *Ibid.*, p. 469. These seats were still in St. John's Chapel when Harwood wrote in 1806 (*ibid.*, p. 555); but Mr. W. A. Wood tells me that between 40 and 50 years ago the interior of the Chapel was renovated and all the old fittings removed.

¶ Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 67.

** See *post*, p. 119. Johnson placed the period of his abstention from church as from his ninth to his fourteenth year. But we may safely conclude that this period of five years was really the five years during which St. Mary's was closed, from 1716 to 1721.

†† Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 67.

‡‡ Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 61.

Yorkshire clergyman then staying with his patron, Lord Gower, at Trentham, remarked as follows :—

Johnson, the Litchfield Librarian, is now here ; he propagates learning all over this diocese, and advanceth knowledge to its just height ; all the Clergy here are his Pupils, and suck all they have from him ; Allen cannot make a warrant without his precedent, nor our quondam John Evans draw a recognition *sine directione Michaelis*.*

This extract supplied Macaulay, that prince of journalists, with excellent material for a characteristically highly coloured tribute to Michael Johnson's scholarship.† A sense of humour was not one of Macaulay's failings, and he did not even suspect that the letter was written in a jocular spirit, and, while suggesting that old Michael was a well-known character, cannot be accepted as a serious tribute to his learning, which, as we shall see later on,‡ was not of a very precise kind. As a matter of fact, Plaxton, who was Rector of Barwick-in-Elmet, near Leeds, but who lived from time to time at Trentham, where he took much interest in Lord Gower's library, was an inveterate quiz, who rarely put pen to paper without giving rein to his satirical, though quite kindly, humour. His friend Thoresby credited him with a "jocular temper and satirical wit (which displeaseth some, and pleaseth many)." Even years of illness, and a painful disorder which a few months before his letter about Michael Johnson—when he was nearing seventy—was causing him to live "but in pain and misery," could not quench the sparkle of his wit. With all his spirit of banter, he was a devoted parish priest, and, as Hearne allowed, "a very ingenious man and a good scholar," who "loved antiquities."§

* Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 36.

† Macaulay's *Biographies*, 1860, p. 77.

‡ See *post*, p. 93.

§ See my account of Plaxton in *Notes and Queries*, 10th Series, X., 301–2, 422–4, and 503–5 ; also *Johnsonian Gleanings*, ante, I., 25–6. In *The Times Literary Supplement* for 19 Feb. 1920, p. 128, under "Notes on Sales," it is mentioned that on 9 Feb. there was sold at an auction in New York a letter from one G. Haviland, dated May 1709, which embodied a hitherto unknown satire by Daniel Defoe, entitled "Parson Plaxton of Barwick in y^e Country of York turn'd inside out." No particulars were forthcoming as to the nature of the satire, or of Plaxton's retort to Defoe, which was also contained in the letter. In the 5th *Report of the Historical MSS. Commission*, p. 197, I find that among the Duke of Sutherland's papers is a letter dated 11 Feb. 1672/3, from Plaxton to William Leveson Gower (who five months later presented him to the living of Sheriffhales—see my account of Plaxton in *Notes and Queries*, 10th Series, X., 301), written from Stittenham in Yorkshire, in which he speaks of political

A bookseller of Michael Johnson's standing would, of course, be an unusual visitor to a small village like Trentham, and his wares would be much sought after by country parsons with few chances of visiting towns where books could be readily purchased. But, apart from suggesting that, we may take Plaxton's letter more as a dig at the ignorance of the local clergy than as real evidence of Michael's learning.

It is a little curious that Plaxton's letter seems to have been written to the Rev. Francis Skrymsher, Rector of Forton, Salop, a distant cousin of Michael Johnson's connexion, Dr. Gerard Skrymsher.* And it is of interest that Lord Gower, with whom Plaxton was staying, and to replenish whose library Michael may indeed have visited Trentham, was he who in 1739 wrote a letter to a friend of Swift's, asking that the University of Dublin should confer a degree on Samuel Johnson, "a native of this country, and much respected by some worthy gentlemen in his neighbourhood. . . ."[†] There is scarcely room for doubt that in the young scholar Lord Gower would recognise the son of the bookseller from whom he had probably bought many a prized volume. It was this Lord Gower, too, who forfeited Johnson's sympathies by forsaking the Jacobite interest. Boswell thus wrote in his notebook :—

At night[‡] he told Dr. Taylor and me that he had put Lord Gower into his Dictionary under the word *Renegade* (alluding to his having deserted the old Jacobite interest I doubt not). He had mentioned sometimes they say *a Gower*. It was even sent to the press. But said he the printer had more sense than I had, and put it out.§

In the *Life*, Boswell naturally presents the tale in a rather more finished style, but there is no departure from the main facts.||

"Not to name the school or the masters of men illustrious for literature, is a kind of historical fraud, by which honest fame is injuriously diminished," wrote Johnson in his life of Addison : "I would

and other affairs at Malton; another letter (p. 189), dated 9 Nov. 1714, from Lord Cheyne to Plaxton, at Lord Gower's, Trentham, saying that Lord Gower was fortunate in having Plaxton's aid in putting his affairs in order; and yet another (p. 189), same to same, dated 17 Mch. 1715, hoping that the surveyor is at work mapping all the lands, etc. Plaxton was evidently a shrewd man of affairs as well as a scholar.

* *Johnsonian Gleanings*, ante, I., 25; and *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 258.

† Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 133.

§ Adam's *Facsimile of Boswell's Notebook*.

‡ While at Ashburne, 22 Sept. 1777.

|| Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 296.

therefore trace him through the whole process of his education.”* So that he would scarcely complain of our following his own school career in considerable detail.

Mrs. Piozzi tells us that Johnson’s health did not permit him to go to school—that is, to an organized place of learning—until he was eight years old.† This does not seem to be quite correct, for on his own evidence he must have entered Lichfield Grammar School soon after his seventh birthday. From his “Annals” we learn that in the spring of 1719 he had been with Hawkins, the under-master of the Grammar School, “two years, and perhaps four months.”‡ It seems clear, therefore, as already stated,§ that he finished with Tom Browne and private teaching at the end of 1716, and entered the Grammar School in January, 1717. “At this time,” according to an old local chronicler, “he had the appearance of idiotcy, and the sons of a gentleman in the town were reprimanded for bringing home with them that disagreeable driveller.”||

From Boswell we hear that Johnson “began to learn Latin with Mr. Hawkins, usher, or undermaster of Lichfield School, ‘a man’ (said he) ‘very skilful in his little way.’”¶ No doubt Latin had been beyond the scholastic horizon of Mrs. Oliver and Tom Browne. In his “Annals” Johnson tells us a good deal about his struggles with Latin under Mr. Hawkins’s tuition, though unfortunately, owing to the chasm in that interesting record, caused by thirty-two pages of the manuscript having been torn out and destroyed by himself**—for what reason we cannot guess—only the ragged end of the narrative remains. The class seems to have been nourished on “Garretson’s Exercises, Willymot’s Particles, and Walker’s Exercises.”†† Garretson does not appear to have been a grammarian of much note, though his work was in use long after Johnson’s schooldays were over.‡‡ William

* *Johnson’s Lives of the Poets*, ed. Birkbeck Hill, II., 79.

† Piozzi’s *Anecdotes of the late Samuel Johnson*, 2nd ed. 1786, p. 17. Murphy (*Essay*, p. 8) follows her in this statement.

‡ Birkbeck Hill’s *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 138.

§ See *ante*, p. 79.

|| *A Short Account of the City and Close of Lichfield*, T. G. Lomax, Lichfield, 1819, p. 118.

¶ Birkbeck Hill’s *Boswell*, I., 43-4.

** Birkbeck Hill’s *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 127.

†† *Ibid.*, I., 137.

‡‡ *Hermes Romanus, Anglicis Johannis Garretsoni vertendis exercitiis accommodatis*, or a Collection of Latin Words and Phrases for the translating of Garretson’s English Exercises into Latin, 1771.

Willymot's *English Particles exemplified in Sentences designed for Latin Exercises* was a fairly recent work, published in 1703.* "Walker's Exercises" was a much older work, for William Walker, whose *Treatise on English Particles* Johnson in 1763 had recommended young George Strahan to use for reference but not to learn off by heart,† had died in 1684.‡ A still older book used by the class was "Hool's Terminations," which had been published nearly seventy years.§

Thursday was always a favourite day at school, for it was devoted to a general examination, for which no preparation was required, and as the same questions used to be asked over and over again the boys had an easy time. On Saturday, too, they were examined in much the same way. Sometimes the Catechism formed the subject of examination, and Johnson remembered his surprise at finding that George Hector had never been taught his catechism.|| George Hector was younger son of the "man-midwife" who had ushered little Samuel into the world. He was just a year younger than his distinguished fellow-pupil.¶

One of the chief tests in this weekly system of examination was to "form"—or conjugate—verbs. Young Samuel found this very difficult, and one evening in particular, discouraged by previous failures, he felt very anxious as to how he would acquit himself next day. His mother encouraged him to such good purpose that he escaped censure. "We often," she said when he told her of his success, "come off best, when we are most afraid." He soothed his mind in after life by such little memories of his "dear mother." On one occasion he had said to her that at least he did not form verbs "in an ugly shape." "You could not speak plain," she told him afterwards, "and I was proud that I had a boy who was forming verbs." With the other boys he

* See under William Willymot [d. 1737], grammarian, in *Dict. Nat. Biog.*

† *Letters of Samuel Johnson*, ed. Birkbeck Hill, I., 97.

‡ See under William Walker [1623-84], schoolmaster and author, in *Dict. Nat. Biog.*

§ *Terminationes et Exempla Declinationum et Conjugationum in usum Grammaticastrorum*, 1650. See *Dict. Nat. Biog.* under Rev. Charles Hoole [1610-67], educational writer.

|| Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 136.

¶ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 153, where I made the slip of calling him "son" of, instead of "brother" to, Brooke Hector.

learned to repeat the parts of Corderius* and Æsop,† but he carried no recollection of them excepting a passage in one of the *Morals*, dealing with a man who showed his hatred of another by making him rich. He repeated this before his mother with considerable emphasis ; but it suggested an astonishing doctrine to poor Mrs. Johnson, in whom domestic troubles had not encouraged a spirit of abstract philosophy. As the much harassed wife of a thriftless bookseller, she “ could never conceive that riches could bring any evil ” : and she never got the chance of finding her theory false.‡

It is interesting to know that when Johnson started a school of his own at Edial in 1736 he similarly devoted Thursdays and Saturdays to examination—or at least it was part of his scheme to do so.§

On Thursday night they learnt by heart a small portion of Æsop, which they repeated on Friday morning. And on Friday afternoon they learned *Quæ Genus*, which he always enjoyed, while *As in præsentî* just as much disgusted him. When they learned the other chapter, *Propria quæ Maribus*,|| they were examined in the *accidence* ; and they parsed it sometimes with the help of Hoole’s *Terminations*, as they also did the two former chapters. The boys that came to the school with no knowledge of Latin read the *Accidence* through twice before they began to learn it off by heart.¶

It is of interest that Thomas Johnson, youngest son of Michael’s brother Andrew, seems to have been living with them at this time. Thomas Johnson, who turned out a decided failure in life, whose final poverty was generously relieved by the Doctor over half a century later, was full six and a half years senior to Samuel. He was a boy therefore of fifteen or sixteen at the time, and, as he was in manhood described as a currier,** it is probable that he was learning his trade

* Perhaps in another of the Rev. Charles Hoole’s schoolbooks :—*M. Corderius’s School Colloquies, English and Latine. Divided into several clauses, wherein the propriety of both languages is kept*, 1657. (*Dict. Nat. Biog.*)

† Perhaps Hoole’s *Æsop’s Fables, English and Latin*, 1700. (*Ibid.*)

‡ Birkbeck Hill’s *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 136–7.

§ Hawkins’s *Life of Johnson*, 1787, p. 37.

|| The Rev. Charles Hoole published his *Propria quæ Maribus, Quæ Genus, and As in præsentî, Englished and explyained*, in 1650 (*Dict. Nat. Biog.*)

¶ Birkbeck Hill’s *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 136–7.

** *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson’s Ancestry*, pp. 218, 222–4.

at Michael Johnson's parchment manufactory.* In 1770 the Doctor describes Tom Johnson as having been "my playfellow in childhood."† The chapter alluded to above, *Propria quæ Maribus*, Samuel learned so perfectly that he could repeat it without the slightest effort to his mother and Tom Johnson.‡

Many years later, when past middle life, Johnson had the curiosity to look at some of his old schoolbooks—Garretson's *Exercises*, Willymot's *English Particles*, and Walker's *Exercises*§—but he found scarcely any sentences that he would have remembered outside their once familiar setting; and he concluded that things learnt under the mere influence of discipline were soon forgotten, as they were not made the subject of conversation or frequent recollection.||

The whole of the week before the school broke up, and the part of the week in which they actually broke up, were devoted entirely to examination. This made the time easy for both pupils and master, but Johnson could never understand why it should have been so ordered. And the two nights immediately before the breaking up were free, as they were given no exercises to prepare.¶

The identity of "Mr. Hawkins" has hitherto remained undisclosed. This may partly be because he does not seem to have been a university man: certainly there is no record of his graduation at Oxford** or Cambridge.†† But his Christian name was Humphrey, and he had been under-master of Lichfield Grammar School since at least 1695, when, a bachelor of twenty-eight, he was lodging in Sandford Street with some people named Matlock.‡‡ In 1696 his name appears in conjunction with that of the Rev. Robert Shaw,§§ in connexion with St. John's Hospital at Lichfield, of the school of which

* See *ante*, p. 26, and *post*, p. 89.

† *Letters of Samuel Johnson*, ed. Birkbeck Hill, I., 158.

‡ Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 136.

§ William Walker, already mentioned (*ante*, p. 85), published his *English Examples of the Latin Syntaxis* in 1683. Perhaps this is the "*Syntaxis*" which Johnson alludes to in his account of the curriculum (Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 136-7).

|| *Ibid.*, I., 137.

¶ *Ibid.*, I., 138.

** Foster's *Alumni Oxonienses*.

†† *Inf.* Dr. John Venn, F.R.S., who is editing an *Alumni Cantabrigienses*.

‡‡ The household is thus enumerated in the Lichfield census of 1695 (see *ante*, p. 18), under Sandford Street:—"Jo Matlock, 40; Kath. Matlock, 47; Elizab. Rea, boarder, 14; *Humph. Hawkins, Usher, Batchelor, 28 years.*"

§§ See *post*, pp. 110-11.

they were evidently acting as master and under-master, in defiance of the statutes of that institution.* Perhaps it was due to Humphrey Hawkins not having been a graduate that he stuck so long in his position of under-master of the Grammar School: at least a quarter of a century—and it was probably much more†—seems a long and unusual term to serve in such a capacity, especially for a man of good natural abilities.

Master and pupil got on excellently together, and Johnson always looked back with pleasure to this period of his schooling under Hawkins. "I was," he said, "indulged and caressed by my master, and, I think, really excelled the rest." Though lasting little more than two years, it left a great impression on his mind—greater than did any other equal period of his life. For his intellect was beginning to form, and his power of observation grew, so that the novel experiences it supplied, and the little incidents that seemed so important to his childish mind, made the time appear much longer in retrospect than it really had been.‡

One incident, which, according to Mrs. Piozzi, he used to relate to all his friends, belonged to a period about his ninth year, when he was reading the play of Hamlet. Sitting in his father's kitchen, with the volume in his hands, he read steadily on, till he came to the ghost scene, which seemed so realistic to him that "he suddenly

* In a citation of 25 Sept. 1696, addressed to the authorities of St. John's Hospital, preparatory to Bishop Lloyd's visitation there three days later, these authorities are enumerated as Francis Ashenhurst, Master or Warden; George Holder, Chaplain; "*Robertum Shaw, ludi-magistr. liberæ scholæ Gramm., Humfridum Hawkins, Hostiarium sive Hyperdidasculum*"; and William Gamble, Bailiff (Harwood's *Lichfield*, p. 550). Under the original statutes of the Hospital, dated 1495, there was to be a Master of Grammar, in priest's orders, with an Usher to assist him (*ibid.*, 543-4); and both, together with the chaplain, were strictly enjoined to live continually within its walls (*ibid.*, 545). But it is clear, from this extract, that the conditions were not being respected. A month after the visit, Bishop Lloyd issued fresh regulations, in which, to compensate for the recent decline in the value of money, the Master of Grammar was permitted to increase his stipend by taking fees from those parents able to pay for their children's education (*ibid.*, pp. 553-4). In the Lichfield census of 1695 (see *ante*, p. 18), under "St. John's Street without the Barrs in St. Michael's Parish," is enumerated a household of thirteen men, ranging in age from 51 to 90, bracketed together with this note:—"Hospital men and noe Master." This was clearly St. John's Hospital, with no resident officials.

† On 30 Oct. 1731 "Hum: Hawkins" witnessed the will of Joseph Adey, of Lichfield, the attorney (see *post*, p. 93). See *post*, IV., Appendix H.

‡ Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 138.

hurried up stairs to the street door that he might see people about him."*

The parents' troubles are not always the children's troubles, and while Samuel was happily acquiring the first rudiments of a classical education from Hawkins, his father was having serious anxiety in connexion with his parchment manufactory, which, as we have seen, he had established somewhere about 1697.† Boswell tells us that Michael Johnson—

being a man of good sense, and skill in his trade, acquired a reasonable share of wealth, of which however he afterwards lost the greatest part, by engaging unsuccessfully in a manufacture of parchment.‡

But this statement loses most of its point when we know that he was engaged in this manufacture for a generation: a business essentially unprofitable could not have been carried on for thirty years, and Michael persisted in it despite the law's endeavour to prevent him continuing one branch at least.§

On 10 October 1717, some nine months after Samuel entered the Grammar School, Michael Johnson was indicted at the Lichfield Quarter Sessions "for using y^e Trade of a Tanner," without having been apprenticed to it. The action was taken under an Act of Elizabeth, which made it unlawful for any person to exercise a craft without having been apprenticed to it for at least seven years; or to set any other person to work in it who had not been so apprenticed, except as a journeyman or as hired by the year. The indictment named the actual period of his offence as the three months from 7 May to 30 July 1717, for every person adjudged to have wittingly offended was to forfeit forty shillings for every month, one half of which went to the Corporation and the other half to the informer.

The Quarter Sessions were held in the Guildhall in Lichfield,

* Piozzi's *Anecdotes of the late Samuel Johnson*, 2nd ed. 1786, pp. 19-20; and see *post*, p. 167. The Johnsons lived in their kitchen (see *post*, p. 114), which was ten steps below the ground floor; the ground floor being four steps above the street level. When he reached the top of the basement steps he would be just by the front door.

† See *ante*, p. 26.

‡ Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 36.

§ This account of the proceedings against Michael Johnson is based on the full evidences printed in my *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 211-16.

and on that particular Thursday the presiding magistrates were the then Senior Bailiff, Richard Ball; the Junior Bailiff, Thomas Smalridge—brother to George Smalridge, Bishop of Bristol; William Fettiplace Nott, the Steward; together with George Harding and William Potts, the Senior and Junior Bailiffs of the year before.* The Grand Jury, consisting of thirteen representative local men who had mostly held civic office—such men as the Thomas Adeys, senior and junior,† Thomas Thacker, and Luke Robinson, the mercer,‡ whose daughter married Matthew Boulton, the celebrated engineer—returned a true bill against Michael Johnson, bookseller. The Sheriff was ordered to cause him to appear at the next Quarter Sessions, on 16 January 1717/18, when, however, Michael craved leave that his case might be delayed. It duly came up at the next Quarter Sessions, on 24 April 1718. Richard Ball, the senior magistrate, was now dying,§ and so did not appear, but his four fellow-magistrates were on the bench again. Michael Johnson declared himself not guilty, and “put himself upon the country.” Samuel’s godfather, Richard Wakefield,|| who appeared to prosecute in his official capacity of coroner,¶ did the like, so the Sheriff was ordered to empanel a petty jury to try the case at the next Quarter Sessions.

But Michael Johnson seems to have succeeded in introducing more delay. On 28 August 1718 one Simon Bibb, a tradesman at Walsall, wrote to him in reference to some basils, or tanned sheep skins, that Michael had sent him on approval. On the back of the

* The bailiffs, at the expiration of their term of office, sat as magistrates for one year.

† See *post*, IV., Appendix H.

‡ He was living with his parents in Market Street at the time of the 1695 census (see *ante*, p. 18) :—“W^m Robinson, Gent., Reputed 42; Sarah his wife, 38; W^m, 14, Luke, 13, James, 9, sons; Sarah, 11, Mary, 5, Hannah, 1, Daught^{rs}; Tho: Lort, App^t, 17; Joan Winchley, serv^t, 20 odd.” *Re* Joan Winchley, or Winckley, see *ante*, p. 57.

§ The will of Richard Ball, of Lichfield, gent., dated 13 Apl. 1718, was proved 11 Nov. 1718 at Lichfield; from it we learn that he married Elizabeth, daughter of Thomas Foster, of Castle Bromwich, and left two children, George and Elizabeth. The 1695 census (see *ante*, p. 18) shows him to have been living in Market Street :—“Rich^d Ball, Batchelor, 28, 50th per Ann.; Judith Ball, Spinstr, 26; Margery Powlson, 25, Mary Smith, 22, serv^t.”

|| See *ante*, p. 55.

¶ The endorsement on the indictment states that “Levett” (no doubt Theophilus Levett; see *post*, p. 176, and IV., Appendix L) was attorney for the King, so that he evidently conducted the prosecution (*Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson’s Ancestry*, pp. 211, 213).

letter, in Michael's handwriting, is a list of twenty-four names, evidently a copy of a jury pannel, and against half of the names his attorney has written "*Jur*," to show which were actually sworn. What view these twelve good men and true took of Michael's offence we have no record to show. But the opinion of his fellow-townsmen is indicated by the fact that in 1718, probably after the case had been decided at the Quarter Sessions held in October, he was elected Junior Bailiff of the city.*

It is decidedly curious that this Walsall tradesman, who in his letter says that he will come over to Lichfield on the following Saturday, has a representative now in Lord Knaresborough,† whose wife has the distinction of representing Johnson's first love, Mrs. Carless, and her brother Edmund Hector.‡ Lord Knaresborough himself can claim still further Johnsonian associations, for his ancestor, John Turton, who married Mary Meysey, was son of John Turton and

* Harwood's *Lichfield*, p. 432. The Rev. F. A. Homer sends me an abstract of an indenture in his possession, dated 10 July 5 George I (1719), between John Bayley, gent., and Michael Johnson, gent., the then bailiffs of the City of Lichfield and their brethren of the said City, of the one part, and Henry Rathbone of the said City, gent., of the other part, by which, in consideration of the surrender of a former lease bearing date 1 July 1682, made by the bailiffs and citizens of the said City, to John Rathbone, father of the said Henry, for the term of 40 years under the like rent as thereafter mentioned, a close with its appurtenances in the said City, commonly called the Swan Piece and lately gained out of the Upper Poole and then in possession of said Henry Rathbone or his undertenants, was let to said Henry Rathbone for 21 years from 20 Mch. last past at the annual rent of £3. Signed, JOHN BAYLEY, MICH. JOHNSON. [This deed has since been presented to the Birthplace at Lichfield.]

† Simon Bibb was Mayor of Walsall in 1693, 1706, and (as S. B., *senior*) in 1721 (Frederic W. Willmore's *History of Walsall*, 1887, pp. 206-7). "Mary, da. of Mr. Bibb, of Walsal," married the Rev. Thomas Meysey [1710-62], rector of Perton, co. Worc., whose second daur. and co-heir, Mary Meysey, married John Turton, of Sugnall, Staffs., in 1774 (Nash's *Worcestershire*, I., 54). Elizabeth, daur. of John Turton and Mary Meysey, married Richard John Thompson in 1803, and had an eldest son, Sir Harry Stephen Meysey-Thompson, 1st bart., whose son, Sir Henry Meysey Meysey-Thompson, is the first Lord Knaresborough (Burke's *Peerage*).

‡ See *post*, pp. 124-5. The Rev. Walter Carless had by Ann Hector one surviving child, Anne Carless, who married George Hopper and had a son Walter Carless Hopper, whose son, the Rev. Edmund Hector Hopper, changed his name to Shipperdson: his surviving child, Mary Adeline Shipperdson, married Sir Henry Pottinger, 3rd bart., and had an only child, Ethel Adeline, now Lady Knaresborough (*Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 152; Hill and Dent's *Memorials of the Old Square*, p. 134; Burke's *Landed Gentry*, under "Shipperdson of Hermitage"; T. A. C. Attwood's *Pedigree of Carless or Carles*, privately printed 1916, p. 11 and tabular pedigree in pouch).

Mabella Swynfen, and thus a grandson of Johnson's godfather and a nephew of Mrs. Desmoulins.*

The probability is that Michael Johnson was acquitted, for he seems to have had a good defence. As the Rev. George Plaxton suggested with sly humour,† Michael was a bit of an amateur lawyer, and he actually drafted the defence in his own hand and his own language before getting expert legal assistance. This autograph defence is the most interesting document we possess in connexion with Michael Johnson, and helps us far more than any other evidence to appraise his claim to education. His case was that, as a stationer, he had for full twenty years bought hides and skins for the manufacture of vellum and parchment, and that those unfit for the purpose he had formerly employed one Thomas Rutter to tan ; and

that when Tho. Rutter Lay on His death Bead He requested His friends that came to take their last leave of Him to speak to me to continew my buisness with his wife and sone.

As we have seen, Thomas Rutter had died about 1702,‡ and Michael then employed his widow, and afterwards her son John. But lately he had removed his business from John Rutter and given it to one John Barton, a freeman of Lichfield and last year's Warden of the Company of Tanners,§ who had a tan-house of his own at Lichfield, where anyone might take skins to be tanned.

That tis common for any countrey man that has a sterck Cow or Horse that dies to bring the Hyde to the Tanner, and when Tannd the owner sels the leather or uses it Himself as will most turne to his proât, and what may be done with one too or 3 may with 100 ;

that John Rutter

formerly had for several years his sole dependance on this defendant, but ungratefully having now forgot the Bread he eat is become the most vigerouse Prossecutor.

It is therefore probable that John Rutter, in encouraging proceedings against Michael Johnson, was equally moved by spite and by a desire to pocket half the fine in case of conviction.

* See *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 230 ; and Shaw's *Staffordshire*, I., 133.

† See *ante*, p. 82.

‡ See *ante*, p. 27.

§ The Tanners' Company of Lichfield was one of the oldest local companies ; even in 1625, when its laws were renewed, it was stated to be " very ancient " (*inf.* W. H. Russell, Cheltenham).

One sentence in Michael's draft has an especial interest. "I am a merchant Tradeing to Ireland, Scotland, and the furter most parts of England, and deals in the Commodities of those Countreys, more perticular in Hydes and Skins." As before suggested, it is quite possible that Michael himself may have visited Ireland and Scotland,* and may even have anticipated some of his son's racial prejudices.

The orthography and general style of this rough draft may suggest that Michael was not quite so scholarly a person as many have supposed. But even members of the educated classes at that time, and even later, wrote letters which to us of to-day often seem vehemently illiterate; so that we must not lay too much stress upon careless spelling and grammar. He was evidently very ready with his pen and capable of fluent and vigorous expression. He rattled off this draft in the first person and then corrected it to the third person to give it a more legal form. Then, turning over the sheet, on the other side he wrote a condensed version of it. This he handed over to his attorney, Mr. Adey—probably Joseph Adey, senior,† father of the Town Clerk‡—who then prepared the formal brief for the defendant's counsel, Mr. R. Moreton. Mr. Adey followed Michael Johnson's own draft very closely in stating the defendant's case, even incorporating some of his graphic expressions in the brief. John Barton, the principal witness, was to testify that he rented a tanyard from Mr. Jackson on a lease, and that Michael Johnson entrusted him with a stock of hides and skins, which he duly delivered back "compleatly tanned and manufaccioned." Michael had nothing to do with the actual tanning, and, to show that John Barton was not a mere servant working for wages, it was to be given in evidence that, though he received a certain sum weekly from Michael for subsistence money, he also received further payment according to the quantity and quality of the work done. This was a different arrangement from that made with Rutter, who was simply paid so much a dozen

* See *ante*, p. 26-7.

† Who seems to have been apprenticed to Johnson's godfather, Richard Wakefield; he was living with him in 1695 (see *ante*, p. 55).

‡ See *ante*, p. 69, and *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 212; also *post*, IV., Appendix H.

for tanning. Mr. Mallett,* the other witness, was to be called to prove that, in other places where vellum and parchment were made, the skins more suitable for leather were set aside and sent to be tanned, and then delivered back to their owner, who was allowed to sell them without molestation.

Even if, as seems probable, the petty jury were convinced by Michael Johnson's defence, the case must have affected him adversely and contributed to the declension of his fortunes, if only to the extent of the expense in which it involved him. However, he stuck to his guns manfully in the matter of the tanning, as will be seen later,† and the letter from Simon Bibb shows that he did not desist even while the case was *sub judice*.

Boswell's statement that Michael's fortunes declined as a result of engaging in the manufacture of parchment he derived from Miss Seward, who, writing in 1785, alleged that the scene of operations was

a building (now destroyed) near *the great willow*. In this new undertaking nothing prospered; they had no sooner bought a large stock of skins, than a heavy duty was laid upon that article, and from Michael's absence by his many avocations as a bookseller, the parchment business was committed to a faithless servant, and thence they gradually declined into strait circumstances.‡

But Miss Seward's story, though containing an element of truth, does not suggest an almost lifelong association with this particular trade. Stebbing Shaw tells us also that the "Parchment-house," as it was called, stood by Stowe Pool, near "Johnson's Willow," but that "no vestiges of such manufactory" remained at the time he wrote; that the pits were then filled up, and the yard divided between

* I suggested (*Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 216) that this was probably Jonathan Mallett, Sheriff of Lichfield in 1717. I feel sure of it now, because at the time of the Lichfield census of 1695 (see *ante*, p. 18) he was the only person with the surname in Lichfield: he was then "servant" to Mr. John Atkins, of Market Street:—"John Atkins, Widdr, 50; Peter his son, 17; Jonath. Mallett, servt, 25." "Jonthn. Mallet and Ann Deakin" were married 27 Sept. 1695 at St. Mary's, Lichfield. This is of interest, for Ann Deakin was Michael Johnson's servant (see *ante*, p. 13). The Atkins and Johnson households were close together in Market Street, so that the couple had excellent opportunities of courtship. Ann, wife of Mr. Jonathan Mallett, was buried 18 Aug. 1728 at St. Michael's. Jonathan Mallett and Ann Mallett were married at St. Mary's 26 Dec. 1728 and had five children baptized between 1731 and 1739. Whether this was the original Jonathan or his son I do not know.

† See *post*, p. 119.

‡ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 210.

a gardener and Miss Seward's friend John Saville, who there indulged his "taste for botanical amusements." Shaw further says that "old Mr. Johnson" carried on this manufacture "until he had greatly enriched his servants, and injured his own fortune."* I am afraid that the evidence of these chroniclers would not have pleased "old Mr. Johnson," who, as we have seen, was at pains to show that the persons who tanned for him were *not* his servants.

The Doctor told Mrs. Thrale that when Michael's

workshop, a detached building, had fallen half down for want of money to repair it, his father was not less diligent to lock the door every night, though he saw that any body might walk in at the back part, and knew that there was no security obtained by barring the front door.

"*This*," he said, "was madness."† The story must relate to the Parchment House: it cannot refer to his shop in the Market Square. That young Samuel took an interest in this branch of his father's business we may conclude from the fact that on 22 September 1773 he rather surprised the company at Ulinish, in Skye, by giving "an account of the whole process of tanning."‡

The trouble arising out of his tanning operations did not prevent Michael Johnson from showing activity in his more legitimate business of selling books and kindred wares. An advertisement of an auction sale which "Michael Johnson of Lichfield" proposed to hold at The Talbot, in Sidbury, beginning on Friday, 21 March 1717/8, at six o'clock in the evening, throws much light upon his business methods, and suggests that he took a generous view as to the range of a book-seller's operations. Shop-books, pocket-books, "fine French prints, for staircases and large chimney-pieces," maps large and small, are to be sold as well as general literature, while "to please the ladies" are added "store of fine pictures and paper hangings," the pictures to be on view by noon, "that they may be viewed by daylight." Those who attend are not to wonder that he begins every day's sale with small and common books, as the room takes some time

* Shaw's *Staffordshire*, I., 346. Shaw took this word for word from a communication by Johnson's kinsman Richard Greene, of Lichfield museum fame (*Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 145), to *Gent.'s Mag.* for July 1785, pp. 495-7.

† Piozzi's *Anecdotes of the late Samuel Johnson*, 2nd ed. 1786, p. 4.

‡ Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, V., 246.

to fill, "and persons of address and business seldom coming first, they are entertainment till we are full." Catalogues are to be given out at the place of sale, or at the Lichfield shop. The circular, which is addressed "To all Gentlemen, Ladies, *and others*, in and near Worcester," quaintly concludes :—"I have no more, but to wish you pleased, and myself a good sale, who am your humble servant, M. JOHNSON."

In this advertisement it is also mentioned that he had recently held auctions at Gloucester, Tewkesbury, Evesham, and other places in the neighbourhood.* This helps to explain the Doctor's statement that his father was "little at home."† Mrs. Piozzi says that he "could always take his horse and ride away for orders when things went badly"‡—that is, when Mrs. Johnson was more querulous than usual; and that his business, "leading him to be much on horseback, contributed to the preservation of his bodily health, and mental sanity; which, when he staid long at home, would sometimes be about to give way."§ The Doctor, when he visited Chester in 1774 with Mr. and Mrs. Thrale, recollected that his father had attended the fair there long ago, when he himself, at some unrecorded time of his childhood, had the small-pox.||

It is clear that Michael Johnson's business was of a decidedly varied character. Had he been more methodical it is possible that his initiative and energy might have been rewarded with considerable prosperity. But neither he, nor his wife, seems ever to have made any attempt to keep proper accounts, or to find out how they really stood, and no business can succeed without some financial method. It was not until about 1768 that their son endeavoured, in retrospect, to calculate their profits.¶ Boswell tells us that Michael's narrow circumstances forced him "to be very diligent in business";** but it is only fair to him to admit that he seems to have been naturally hardworking and industrious from the very beginning, before he was

* *A Short Account of the City and Close of Lichfield*, T. G. Lomax, Lichfield, 1819, pp. 163-5.

† Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 132.

‡ Piozzi's *Anecdotes of the late Samuel Johnson*, 2nd ed. 1786, p. 13.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¶ Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, V., 435.

¶ Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 133.

** Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 36.

burdened with so many responsibilities. He was evidently ambitious at the outset, and no doubt looked forward to a successful business career which should have in it something more than the mere vulgar opulence of the tradesman. Boswell says that he was a "pretty good Latin scholar,"* and it is clear that he could at least express himself in English with considerable facility, if not with a fastidious regard for those laws of language which governed the writings of his son. He was probably a man of wide information and intelligence, and even if his scholarship was not of a very finished kind it was at any rate a healthy symptom of intellectual ambition. The Doctor tells us that his "father had much vanity, which his adversity hindered from being fully exerted."†

The Rev. William Shaw, a friend of Johnson's and his first actual biographer, who derived his knowledge of the Doctor's early life principally from Dr. Swynfen's daughter, Mrs. Desmoulins,‡ and whose matter also stamps him as a witness of considerable value, says that Michael "chiefly dealt in books, stationary ware, and book-binding"; that in a place like Lichfield, where there were no professional authors and few who read even for recreation, such a business "could not be very profitable"; and that therefore its proprietor "might be reputable, but could not be rich." Shaw attributes to Michael "acknowledged shrewdness" as well as "habits of steadiness and punctuality," from which "he acquired great personal respectability." But he temperately observes that it does not follow that "because the son made a figure, the father should be a prodigy," and hazards that "his intellectual abilities, unimproved and called forth by no interest or emergency, were notwithstanding perhaps but moderate." Shaw is content to think

that he preserved himself by his industry and attention in a state of honesty and independence, that he had prudence enough by no schemes or speculations of any kind to injure his credit with his neighbours, and that whatever disappointments and crosses occurred in his intercourse with the world, he discovered the same innate fund of satisfaction and cheerfulness which marked the most prosperous circumstances of his life.

* Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 36.

† Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 132.

‡ *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the late Dr. Samuel Johnson* [by Wm. Shaw], 1785, preface. And see Napier's *Boswell*, I., preface, viii.

According to this same chronicler,

the oldest people in the place would often tell the Doctor, who heard them with a sensible satisfaction, that his father continued to the last such a favourite among the boys, that he was perhaps the only one in town who never received any injury from their petulance and mischief.*

Johnson himself became sufficiently conversant with the business to realize its difficulties. Writing in 1776 to Dr. Wetherell, Master of University College, Oxford, on the subject of the "circulation of books, which, perhaps, every man has not had opportunity of knowing," he remarks of the country bookseller—with his own father no doubt in view—that "his receipts are small, and his debts sometimes bad."†

Not long before his death, Johnson told Hawkins

that his father, in the course of his trade of a bookseller, had become bankrupt, and that Mr. William Innys had assisted him with money or credit to continue his business.

He therefore felt it "an obligation to be grateful to his descendants," and proposed to leave his representative £200.‡ This he did in his will, where it is ordered "to pay to the representatives of the late William Innys, bookseller, in St. Paul's Church-yard, the sum of two hundred pounds."§ In all probability Michael Johnson was never adjudicated a bankrupt, though he may very likely have been insolvent at some time. William Innys, who was a bookseller of some repute, had died as far back as 1 December 1756,|| leaving no children of his

* *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the late Dr. Samuel Johnson* [by Wm. Shaw], 1785, pp. 7-10.

† Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, II., 426.

‡ Hawkins's *Life of Johnson*, 1787, p. 581. § Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, IV., 402.

|| *London Magazine*, 1756, p. 612. William, son of Andrew Innys, of the city of Bristol, gent., was bound to Benjamin Wallford for 7 years on 1 June 1702; he took up the freedom of the Stationers' Company on 6 June 1709, and was admitted to the cloathing on 3 Apl. 1710. Wallford was publisher to the Royal Society, and had his business at the Prince's Arms, St. Paul's Churchyard, where Innys seems to have succeeded him (*inf.* Mr. R. T. Rivington, Clerk to the Stationers' Company). "Mr. William Innys in St. Paul's Churchyard, Bookseller," was one of the subscribers to Francis Peck's *Desiderata Curiosa* in 1732. David Hume in 1742 speaks of "Innys, the great bookseller in Paul's Churchyard" (Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, IV., 440). Roger North, too, alludes to him in his *Lives of the Norths* (Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, II., 125). For references to various of his publications, see Nichols's *Literary Anecdotes*, I., 188, 212, 240, 256, 321, 329, 382, 425; II., 24; IX., 492; from these references it will be learnt that he was in partnership with his brother John Innys (the exor. of his will—see below), *circa* 1721-6. In 1735 and 1739 he was in partnership with R. Manby

own,* so that it must have involved considerable enquiry to settle who were his "representatives," and how the money was to be apportioned between them.† We do not know what led him to treat Michael

(*ibid.*, IV., 502; IX., 561; and *Notes and Queries*, 6th Series, II., 141). Richard Manby, "a bookseller of great eminence on Ludgate-hill," and Master of the Stationers' Company in 1765, died 13 Apl. 1769, at Walthamstow (*Lit. Anec.*, III., 602). Other references to William Innys will be found in Nichols's *Literary Illustrations*, I., 359, 362, 363; II., 35; IV., 108, 323; Joseph Hill's *Bookmakers of Old Birmingham*, 1907, p. 49; and "Hearne's Collections," vol. VII. (*Oxford Historical Soc.*, vol. 48), pp. 270-1. Joseph Richardson, bookseller, presumably the partner he named in his will—see below—died 2 Sept. 1763 (*London Magazine*, p. 504).

* William Innys, of London, bookseller. Will dated 13 Sept. 1756. I am now residing at my brother-in-law's, John Cossins, Esq., of Redland Court, par. of Westbury upon Trym, co. Glouc. To my brother, Jeremy Innys, of Redland, merchant, all my messuages and lands in Northstoke, co. Somerset, and all my rents there, for life, with contingent remainders, after his death, to my brother John Innys, to my sister Martha, wife of said John Cossins, to John Brickdale, woollen draper, and Slade Baker, linen draper, of Bristol, in trust for my godson, William Baker, son of said Slade, during his minority, and when of age to him and his heirs for ever; if he die before to his brother John Innys Baker; if he die before to his youngest brother Slade Baker; if he die before to his eldest brother, Jeremy Baker. To Elizabeth Bowen, widow of my nephew Andrew Bowen, decd., £10 a year for life, with reversion to her daur., Elizabeth Bowen. To said John Brickdale, £20. To Christ's Hospital, London, £100. To my brother Jeremy Innys, his wife, John Cossins, his wife, John Innys, Slade Baker the elder, my nephew William Morris, his wife, and to my partner Joseph Richardson and his wife, £20 each for mourning. To my servant, Mary Skurry, a year's wages. Residuary legatees, my brothers Jeremy and John Innys, and my sister Martha Cossins. Exor., my brother John Innys. Signed, Wm. Innys. Wits., Edward Young, Wm. Purnell, Jer. Osborne. Proved 13 Dec. 1756, in P.C.C. (339 Glazier), by the exor.

In Camden's *Britannia*, ed. Richard Gough, 1789, I., 274, under Westbury upon Trym, is a reference to "*Redland*, the residence of John Innys, esq. elder brother of the eminent bookseller of that name, whose matchless collection of maps, views and plans of all parts of the world in near 100 volumes, are since his death passed into the library at Holkham."

† His father, Andrew "Innis," gentleman, died 29 Dec. 1733, aged 82, and was buried at St. John's Church, Bristol, where there was erected a marble monument against the south wall of the chancel to his memory, and to that of his first wife, Joan, who died 3 May 1672, and his second wife Elizabeth, who died 1711, by whom he had fourteen children (Wm. Barrett's *History of Bristol*, 1789, p. 489). His son-in-law, John Cossins, built and endowed a chapel at Redland, which was a hamlet in the par. of Westbury upon Trym; it was opened 5 Oct. 1743. Monuments in the chapel tell us that John Cossins, of Redland Court, Esq., died 19 Apl. 1759, aged 77, and Martha [Innys], his widow, 11 Feb. 1762, aged 74; and commemorate three other children of Andrew Innys, viz. John Innys, of Redland Court, Esq., died 27 Oct. 1778, aged 83; Anne Innys, died unmard. 5 Dec. 1747, aged 69; and Mary, widow of Nicholas Marissal, of Edmonton, Esq., died 9 Sept. 1757, aged 66. Nicholas had died 29 Aug. 1739, aged 52, and been buried at Christ Church, Middlesex; but his remains were brought to Redland Chapel in Dec. 1747 (*Bigland's Gloucestershire Collections*, under "*Redland*,"

Johnson with such kindness ; but the earliest record of him, while he was very young in trade, relates to an act of generosity towards a brother bookseller in distress.*

In spite of Michael Johnson's " large and robust body "—according to Mrs. Piozzi he " was a man of still larger size and greater strength than his son "†—and of his " strong and active mind,"‡ he does not seem to have been quite so cheerful as Shaw represented him.§ The Doctor told Mrs. Thrale that his father was " wrong-headed, positive, and afflicted with melancholy " ;|| that there was in him indeed a species of madness, " but that poverty prevented it from playing such tricks as riches and leisure encourage."¶ Boswell attributes to him a mysterious disease of body which causes " a weariness of life, an unconcern about those things which agitate the greater part of mankind, and a general sensation of gloomy wretchedness." His " vile melancholy " he transmitted to his son, who claimed in conse-

where full particulars are given of the arms on the monuments). John Latimer, in his *Annals of Bristol in the Eighteenth Century*, 1893, p. 173, tells us that John Cossins demolished an Elizabethan Redland Court in 1730 and " commissioned John Strahan, a Bristol architect, to erect the handsome building in the Italian style now standing on the same site."

Jeremy " Innis," of Bristol, merchant, died 25 Nov. 1764 (*London Magazine*, 1764, pp. 598, 690). In *An Account of the Public Charities in England and Wales*, by the Editor of " The Cabinet Lawyer," 1828, p. 157, under Bristol, I find this in reference to the " Old Bachelors' and Maids' Almshouses " :—" Mr. *Jeremiah Innis*, one of the feoffees of the charity, in 1752, gave the sum of 100 guineas, which was invested in the Chamber of Bristol, on their bond, at an interest of three guineas per annum." His wife, mentioned in his brother William's will in 1756 (*ante*, p. 99), was very likely the " Mrs. Mary Innys " who bequeathed £200 for the poor of Westbury upon Trym (*Bigland's Gloucestershire Collections*), and the " Mary Innys " who in 1771 left £1000 to the Bristol Infirmary (Barrett's *Bristol*, p. 404). From Burke's *Landed Gentry*, under " Baker of West Hay," par. of Wrington, co. Somerset, I learn that Slade Baker [1717-84] married Elizabeth, daur. of " Jeremy Innes, of Redland Court, near Bristol, Esq., one of the grandsons of Sir Robert Innes, Bart., the 24th Laird of Innes, in Scotland, by Lady Grisel Stuart, dau. of James, Earl of Murray." I can take no responsibility for the Scots lineage ; but it is clear that William Innys, like many other booksellers of his day, came of a very respectable family. Perhaps his Baker grand-nephews were the " representatives " who benefited by Dr. Johnson's legacy.

* When William Bowyer lost his house and stock in London by a disastrous fire in 1712, and his friends got up a subscription to assist him, " William Innys " contributed five guineas (Nichols's *Literary Anecdotes*, I., 61).

† Piozzi's *Anecdotes of the late Samuel Johnson*, 2nd ed. 1786, p. 4.

‡ Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 35.

§ See *ante*, p. 97.

|| Piozzi's *Anecdotes of the late Samuel Johnson*, 2nd ed. 1786, p. 3.

¶ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

quence to have been "mad all his life, at least not sober."* On his tombstone he is described by his son as

a man fearless, steady, spirited, regardless of dangers, very patient in labour ; a constant and warm believer in Christianity ; eminently attentive to his family ; as a bookseller very skilful, of a mind well informed in books and business, with a disposition so even, that although long oppressed with misfortunes he was deficient in no duty either to himself or to his friends.

His conversation was so chaste that neither "pain nor pleasure ever led him to utter anything which might offend pious or modest ears."†

Now Mrs. Johnson was as blameless a woman as her husband was a man. But she was by no means the ideal wife for him. Quite unable to share his literary tastes,‡ and lacking a large outlook on life, she made matters worse by ever letting it be known that she had "married beneath her," and poor Michael seems to have been too proud to argue the point with her.§ His lack of family was in her eyes only less to be deplored than his lack of success in business. Yet she did nothing to help or stimulate him, but merely acted the part of an irritant. "Of business," said her son, "she had no distinct conception ; and therefore her discourse was composed only of complaint, fear, and suspicion." She never even set her husband a good example by systematizing her household expenditure. Their leisure together cannot have provided a very edifying example for their children. They seldom engaged in conversation, for Michael obstinately refused to discuss his affairs with her, and she had no other except this extremely "unwelcome topick." Her son thought that, if she had been intelligent enough to discuss books sometimes, she might have lured Michael into conversation about his business ; but, like many other women who are excellent enough in their narrow way, she had no tact at all and simply irritated where she may actually have wished to propitiate. And so they drifted further and further apart, and the home became one of those cheerless places where husband and wife "had not much happiness from each other." According to the Doctor,

* Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 35 ; V., 215.

† Translation by Dean Bickersteth, quoted in *Guide to Johnson's Birthplace*, 1915,

p. 37.

‡ See *ante*, p. 41.

§ See *ante*, pp. 21, 24, 55, 60.

the root cause of his father's difficulties was debts contracted in early life, which, though he made money, he was unable to satisfy. Mrs. Johnson's idea of their poverty was accentuated by her knowledge that some branches of the business—possibly the parchment manufactory in its later days, for one—were actually run at a loss.* Mrs. Piozzi tells us that Mrs. Johnson, her husband's

conduct in money matters being but indifferent, had a trick of teizing him about it, and was, by her son's account, very importunate with regard to her fears of spending more than they could afford, though she never arrived at knowing how much that was; a fault common, as he said, to most women who pride themselves on their œconomy.†

Boswell certainly exaggerates when he describes Mrs. Johnson as "a woman of distinguished understanding," for everything we know of her points to the narrowness of her intellectual outlook, and the want of breadth even in her character. Though we cannot deny her the possession of various humdrum virtues, we cannot discover evidence of her having ever risen, in any department of her mind or character, above the level of the commonplace; while she sometimes seemed to fall below it. As a matter of fact, in his original notebook, when jotting down Edmund Hector's memories, he did not put it quite so strongly:—

That his Father was a very sensible man and very successful as a Bookseller and Stationer—used to open a shop once a week at Birmingham; but was a loser by a manufactory of parchment which he set up. That his Mother was a very remarkable woman for good understanding. I asked if she was not vain of her son, Mr. Hector said she had too much good sense to be vain; but she knew her son's value.‡

However much Mrs. Johnson failed to realise our ideal of a wife and helpmate, and however much she lacked those elements of greatness which are often attributed to the mothers of distinguished men, there can be no question that she was devoted to her children and won their complete affection. Indeed, she seems to have been conspicuously amiable in every relation except that of a wife. Mrs. Piozzi, who describes her as having been slight in her person and rather below the medium height, says that

* Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 132-3.

† Piozzi's *Anecdotes of the late Samuel Johnson*, 2nd ed. 1786, p. 13.

‡ Adam's *Facsimile of Boswell's Notebook*.

so excellent was her character, and so blameless her life, that when an oppressive neighbour once endeavoured to take from her a little field she possessed, he could persuade no attorney to undertake the cause against a woman so beloved in her narrow circle.*

This is complimentary to Mrs. Johnson : it is even more so to the local attorneys, who must have served their articles in the Garden of Eden.

Dr. Johnson, in the epitaph he wrote for her, said that

she was industrious at home, little known abroad, troublesome to no one, remarkable for quickness of understanding and accuracy of judgment ; very indulgent to the errors of others—little to her own ; always mindful of immortality—she was commended by almost every description of virtue.†

The Doctor clearly idealized his mother in later life, and was anxious by every form of recognition of her memory to atone for those long years during which he failed to visit her.‡ It is a pity that he never gave us any definite particulars in support of such a laudatory epitaph. One complaint he made against her was that she had no clear idea of how to bring up her children : she was forever telling him to “ behave himself properly,” but could never get beyond the empty formulas of conduct.§ He confessed to Mrs. Thrale that “ he should never have so loved his mother, when a man, had she not given him coffee she could ill afford, to gratify his appetite when a boy.” || In his boyhood, as he admitted at Col in 1773, he had quite a partiality for dry oatmeal.¶

Even the economical Mrs. Johnson had her pet extravagance—tea—and in this case it was her husband who recorded the protest. The expense of this beverage—his love of which the Doctor perhaps inherited from his mother—was so great in those days, that Michael successfully discouraged her from visiting her neighbours, or from entertaining them.** It is clear that tea had already become an

* Piozzi's *Anecdotes of the late Samuel Johnson*, 2nd ed. 1786, pp. 7-8.

† *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 177.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

§ Piozzi's *Anecdotes of the late Samuel Johnson*, 2nd ed. 1786, pp. 24-5.

|| *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¶ Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, V., 308. And he had porridge for breakfast ; see *post*, p. 115.

** Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 135.

essential medium for social communion among middle-class women, and it seems rather an ill-conditioned act of Michael's to have checked such an innocent diversion on the part of his wife.

Because of Mrs. Johnson's intellectual limitations we must not conclude that all her son's abilities and distinguished qualities of mind came from his father. She belonged to a family of some education, which produced in her uncle Henry * and her brother Joseph† men of good professional standing, and in her nephew, Cornelius Ford, a man of scholarship and brilliant wit.‡ It is possible that she was the vehicle by which some of those qualities which helped to mark them out from their fellows were transmitted to her elder son.

* See *ante*, p. 32.

† See *post*, pp. 140-2.

‡ See *post*, p. 144.

CHAPTER V

UNDER HUNTER AT THE GRAMMAR SCHOOL

1719-1725

Goes with his brother Nathaniel to stay at Birmingham—Mr. Ford, his mother's brother—Visit to his uncle, John Harrison—Sweet Sally Ford—The Castle Inn, Birmingham—Uncle Andrew Johnson : matrimonial and financial troubles—Mrs. Porter then living close to his uncles—Return to Lichfield—Changes at the Grammar School—Johnson's godfather tackles Hunter—Moved to the upper school—Hunter's career—Robert Shaw, Hunter's predecessor—Hunter as a man and a headmaster—The cost of Johnson's schooling—Edward Holbrooke, the usher—Incidents of Johnson's schooldays—Concentration of mind—Curriculum of the upper school—Michael Johnson still publishing—Hector's memories of his schoolfellow—Johnson's amusements out of school hours—Sloth and energy—Physical and mental supremacy—The Earl of Berkshire rewards his Latin with a guinea—St. Mary's reopens for services, and Johnson returns—A lukewarm churchgoer—Catherine Chambers enters Johnson household—Michael again prosecuted for tanning—Johnson's inherited prejudice against Excise officials—Michael elected Senior Bailiff—Receives £100 from trustees of marriage settlement on surrendering his house.

AT the Whitsuntide of 1719, that is about the end of May, Samuel and Nathaniel Johnson, then boys of nine and six respectively, were sent by their mother to Birmingham for about a fortnight, to stay with some of her relatives there. Samuel seems to have been curious as to "why such boys were sent to trouble other houses," but Mrs. Johnson thought, and rightly, that "much improvement was to be had by changing the mode of life."* Most of the holidays was spent at the house of Mr. Ford, one of her brothers. It is not known that any of her brothers actually lived in Birmingham, but Nathaniel Ford, the youngest son of old Cornelius, at this time a man of forty-two, who had been brought up as a mercer at Stourbridge, had about fifteen

* Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 139.

years ago settled at Sutton Coldfield, some half-dozen miles out of the town, where he established himself as a clothier. In the year of Johnson's birth this uncle was elected Warden of the Corporation of Sutton Coldfield.* Nathaniel's elder brother, Samuel Ford, may also have been living somewhere in the Birmingham area, and it may possibly have been at his house that the Johnson boys stayed.† At any rate, on this occasion, Samuel disgraced himself by eating "so much of a boiled leg of mutton," that his aunt Mrs. Ford "used to talk of it." Mrs. Johnson, "who had lived in a narrow sphere, and was then affected by little things," told her greedy son "seriously that it would hardly ever be forgotten": she was right, for the story is certain now of immortality. This Mrs. Ford "much caressed" her nephew, whose memory of her was of "a good-natured, coarse woman, easy of converse, but willing to find something to censure in the absent."‡ Such a description might not seem applicable to Mrs. Nathaniel Ford, the sister of Johnson's good friend Gregory Hickman,§ the aunt of the charming Dorothy Hickman,|| and the half-sister of the brilliant "Parson" Ford,¶ if we did not remember her remark about little Samuel, "that she would not have picked such a poor creature up in the street."**

The remainder of this Whitsuntide holiday was spent with their uncle John Harrison, who, as we have seen, had been a sadler in Lichfield,†† but had moved to Birmingham some time after Samuel Johnson's birth. His wife was now dead, and his elder son, Cornelius, a young man of eighteen, had the year before entered Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, where he later won a Fellowship, living to become Perpetual Curate of Darlington and to be claimed by his celebrated cousin as "the only one of my relations who ever rose in fortune above penury, or in character above neglect."‡‡ John Harrison's daughter, Phœbe,

* *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 155; also see *ante*, p. 38, and *post*, p. 178.

† See *ante*, pp. 42, 45, 47.

‡ Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 139.

§ See *post*, p. 157.

|| See *post*, p. 158.

¶ See *post*, p. 144.

** See *ante*, p. 59.

†† See *ante*, pp. 38-9.

‡‡ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 181-2. Johnson's condemnation of his relatives is too sweeping: it would scarcely apply to his cousin Thomas Hardwicke, said to have "amassed a great fortune" (*ibid.*, p. 186), or to his cousin, the Rev. Samuel Ford (see *ante*, p. 44).

was only the same age as Samuel,* and the household was run by "Sally" Ford, "a young woman of such sweetness of temper" that her cousin "used to say she had no fault."† "Sally" was probably Sarah, the eldest daughter of Mrs. Johnson's brother Cornelius.‡ We know less of Cornelius Ford than of any other of Johnson's uncles. He was probably not in very flourishing circumstances, for his youngest daughter, Phœbe, who from about 1742 to 1781 acted as housekeeper in the family of Edward Gibbon, the historian, surviving Johnson about a dozen years, was put under the guardianship of her uncle, Dr. Joseph Ford, during her own father's lifetime.§ Uncle Cornelius is principally remembered by Johnson's story of his athletic prowess, preserved by Mrs. Piozzi: how, coming once upon an inscription by the roadside, "in honour of a man who had leaped a certain leap thereabouts, the extent of which was specified upon the stone: Why now, says my uncle, I could leap it in my boots; and he did leap it in his boots."||

John Harrison, though supplied by his eccentric descendant, General Plantagenet-Harrison, with a most distinguished ancestry,¶ did not impress his youthful nephew as cast in an aristocratic mould.

He was a very mean and vulgar man, drunk every night, but drunk with little drink, very peevish, very proud, very ostentatious, but, luckily, not rich.

No wonder if he "did not much like us, nor did we like him."** Perhaps his alcoholic tendency was partly the result of propinquity, for his shop immediately adjoined the Castle Inn: the baker's on the other side cannot have attracted him so much.†† It was to the Castle Inn that Johnson asked Edward Cave to address a letter to him in 1734;‡‡ and to which next year he asked that his library of a hundred

* See *ante*, p. 59.

† Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 139.

‡ See *ante*, p. 38; and *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 157.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 156; and letter by me in *Times Literary Supplement* for 29 Sept. 1921, on Phœbe Ford, following one by Mr. William T. Whitley in the issue of the preceding week; also further letter in issue of 6 Oct., from H. M. Beatty.

|| Piozzi's *Anecdotes of the late Samuel Johnson*, 2nd ed., 1786, p. 5.

¶ See his *History of Yorkshire*, 1879, vol. I., preface, and p. 348.

** Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 139.

†† *Johnsonian Gleanings*, *ante*, II., 111.

‡‡ Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 92.

and odd volumes be forwarded from Oxford.* But his uncle John Harrison was then no more.†

The Castle Inn stood in the High Street of Birmingham,‡ fronting the Beast Market,§ as did also the bookseller's shop of Andrew Johnson.|| The redoubtable Andrew, who had recently married his third wife,¶ does not seem to have entertained his nephews on this occasion, but no doubt he saw something of them, as Samuel would be sure to look up his playfellow Tom Johnson.** Poor Andrew, of whom we last heard in 1702,†† was in pretty low water, although he occupied one of the best shops in the town. His third wife, one Sarah White, added to his troubles by bringing him debts of her own. Before her marriage to him she appears to have run up a bill totalling over five pounds for medicine supplied by Thomas Shepperd, a Bridgnorth apothecary‡‡—and five pounds would buy a lot of physic in those happy days. There was also the bill of the surgeon who was jointly concerned in the cure; and Thomas Shepperd was moved to exclaim that “the Ungrateful Slut had beene with all y^e Doctors and Chyrurgeons in the Countrey before and could not be cured and att last when She got perfectly well went off y^e Spott and we could not get our Money.” Aided by a vicious and very illiterate wife, Shepperd tried hard to recover the money, but up to 1722 he was certainly unsuccessful. The Shepperds were very anxious to have Andrew Johnson and his wife arrested, but William Priest, their young attorney in Birmingham,§§ who knew Andrew personally and considered him unable to pay, discouraged their

* *The Athenæum*, 4 Sept. 1909, pp. 265–6.

† *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, Pedigree XXIX.

‡ *Johnsonian Gleanings*, ante, II., 111.

§ Joseph Hill's *Bookmakers of Old Birmingham*, 1907, p. 43.

|| *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 221. And see ante, p. 18.

¶ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

†† See ante, p. 19.

** See ante, p. 86.

‡‡ Extract from printed register of Claverley, Salop :—mar. 1698–Feb. 10. “ [Mr.] Thomas Shepheard, of St. Leonards, Bridgnorth [apothecary], & Dorothy Underhill, of Kingswinford (licence).” This must have been an earlier marriage, for his wife of the correspondence was Eleanor.

§§ William Priest married Mary [1690–1722], daughter of William Scott, of Great Barr (Howard and Crisp's *Visitation of England and Wales*, “Notes,” vol. XIV., p. 89). This explains how he was brother-in-law to Joseph Scott [1688–1780], with whom “Parson” Ford had financial dealings (*Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 162, 275); and corrects the suggestion made ante, I., 5.

intention, and eventually refused point blank to send them to prison himself.*

It is of peculiar interest that when Samuel Johnson was thus staying with his uncle Harrison, at the age of nine, his future wife, his beloved "Tetty," was living with her first husband, Harry Porter the mercer, in a shop not far away in the High Street, and only a door or two from Andrew Johnson's bookshop.† "Tetty" had been married some few years, and already had two children, Lucy, then a little girl of three, and Jervis Henry, a mere baby, afterwards to become a distinguished captain in the Navy.‡ We never know our fate, and it is difficult to tell which would have been most astonished, the matron of thirty or the boy of nine, if it had been suggested then that they would one day set up housekeeping together.

The holiday was prolonged for several days after the vacation was over. Little Samuel was already something of a correspondent, and when he wrote home he asked that the horses should not be sent for him until Thursday of the first school week, which presumably had begun on the Monday. He also wrote to tell his mother of a rattle he had got for his whip, which afforded him much pleasure. The horses duly came to fetch them home, in charge of Michael Johnson, who, not having Dr. Birkbeck Hill at his elbow to correct him, told the ostler he had twelve miles to go, when he should have said sixteen. Not only did he make an error of fact, but also an error of tact, for he mentioned to the ostler that he had "two boys under his care," which seriously offended Samuel. As showing how scarce watches were at that time, Samuel recollected that his father "had then a watch, which"—he adds with naïve simplicity—"he returned when he was to pay for it."§

When Samuel got back home, he found things moving at the Grammar School. The headmaster, the dreaded Hunter, had been in

* *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 218-22. A copy of Harwood's *Lichfield*, 1806, extra illustrated and containing a "Memorandum in the autograph of Dr. Johnson's uncle, Andrew Johnson," was advertised for sale at Christie's on 6 Mch. 1888 (*Notes and Queries*, 7th Series, V., 146).

† *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 233; *Johnsonian Gleanings*, ante, II., 111; Joseph Hill's *Bookmakers of Old Birmingham*, pp. 43, 108.

‡ See post, IV., Appendix F; also *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 236-8; *Johnsonian Gleanings*, I., 16 (where his portrait is reproduced), 40.

§ Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 139.

the habit of keeping back the town boys in the lower school as long as ever he could, for the boarders were more profitable to him and were probably also of a better class socially,* and better scholars on the average. But the case was sufficiently glaring to embolden the town-clerk, Johnson's godfather Richard Wakefield,† to reprove Hunter and get the injustice set right. So the whole class was moved to the upper school : there were eleven boys in all, the names of ten of whom Johnson could recall in after life. Poor Hawkins, however, was not at all pleased to have so many of his best pupils taken from him ; and the change had its serious financial side to him, for he " complained that he had lost half his profit." Johnson himself wept at the change, though the rest of the class, boylike, did not worry themselves.‡

John Hunter, the best known of Johnson's schoolmasters, was a man of very considerable mark, who turned out an exceptional number of distinguished pupils.§ Of probably humble parentage, he was born at St. Albans about 1674, and in 1691, at the age of seventeen, matriculated from University College, Oxford, where he took his B.A. in 1695 and his M.A. in 1700. In 1704 he was appointed headmaster of the Free Grammar School at Lichfield, in succession to Robert Shaw, and ordained Deacon by the Bishop at Eccleshall.|| In 1709 he was made a Prebendary of Lichfield.¶ About 1712, or earlier, he married his first wife, Miss Ann Norton, daughter of Edward Norton of Warwick, whose family had years before intermarried with the Porters.**

Hunter's predecessor, Robert Shaw, curiously enough, though he died before Johnson's birth,†† can be connected with him through a

* See the list of the headmaster's boarders in 1695, *post*, p. 134.

† See *ante*, p. 55.

‡ Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 138.

§ See *post*, p. 121 *et seq.*

|| *Johnsonian Gleanings*, *ante*, I., 33 ; and *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 243-4. Joseph Hill, in his *Bookmakers of Old Birmingham*, 1907, p. 25, is inclined to identify the Lichfield pedagogue with the John Hunter who was master of Solihull School, by a curious coincidence, till 1704. But that man, when appointed to Solihull in 1694, was described as " John Hunter, M.A., late of Birmingham." At that date our John Hunter had not even taken his B.A. degree.

¶ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 243.

** *Ibid.*, pp. 235, 244-5 ; *Johnsonian Gleanings*, *ante*, I., 33.

†† Robert Shaw was Headmaster from 1680 to 1704 (Harwood's *Lichfield*, p. 499). The following entries in the registers of St. Mary's, Lichfield, refer to him and his family : —1685/6, Jan. 7, bapt., Thos., s. Mr. Robt. Shaw ; 1687/8, Mch. 6, bapt., Ann, d. Mr. Robt. Shaw ; 1688, Oct. 4, bur., Thos., s. Mr. Robt. Shaw ; 1691, July 22, bapt., Jane, d.

descendant. For his son Peter Shaw, who became Physician-in-Ordinary to George II and III, as well as a writer of some note, left a daughter Elizabeth, wife of Richard Warren, who succeeded his father-in-law as the Royal Physician,* and again was succeeded in 1797 by Johnson's connexion John Turton.† Dr. Warren was a member of "The Club," and attended Johnson in his last illness.‡

Johnson told Boswell that Hunter "was very severe, and wrong-headedly severe;" that he thrashed the boys unmercifully, and equally for ignorance and negligence, between which he made no distinction. He would ask outlandish questions, such as the "Latin for a candlestick," and promptly beat the boys who could not answer them, without waiting to consider whether they had had a reasonable opportunity of learning the answer.§ Mrs. Piozzi implies that Johnson either "hated or despised" all his schoolmasters,|| and quotes his description of Hunter as "so brutal, that no man who had been educated by him ever sent his son to the same school." Yet even she had heard Johnson "acknowledge his scholarship to be very great";¶ and the Rev. William Shaw says that to Hunter's "elegant and correct method of teaching, the Doctor has often acknowledged the highest obligations."** The truth was that Johnson, though he had no love for Hunter, yet recognized his competence. "Abating his brutality,

Mr. Robt. Shaw; 1694, Apl. 9, bapt., Peter, s. Robt. Shaw; 1704, May 16, bur., Mr. Robt. Shaw. The younger daughter, Jane, appears as Joan in the census of 1695 (see *post*, p. 134). Robert Shaw's gravestone is just inside the entrance of St. Mary's Church. Mr. W. A. Wood has kindly sent me a rubbing of the inscription, which is much worn in places, and with the help of friends I have deciphered most of it, as follows: "*H S E | Robertus Shaw Ar. M | Communi scholæ hujus | Urbis annos viginti | Quatuor Præfectus, Qui | Cum Vitæ seriem piæ | Sedulæ laudabilis | Per 50 annos egisset | proh dolor | Diem supremum [?suum] | [?clausit] | Anno Dom | 1704 | Prope etiam Thomas | De filiis ejusdem | Unus Jacet.*" Perhaps Johnson knew Peter Shaw personally, for in his life of Addison he speaks of "Mr. Shaw, then master of the school at Lichfield, father of the late Dr. Peter Shaw" (*Johnson's Lives of the Poets*, ed. Birkbeck Hill, II., 80). I have not been able to find Robert Shaw's will, at Lichfield or in P.C.C.

* See *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, under Peter Shaw and Richard Warren.

† See *post*, p. 158.

‡ Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 479; IV., 399, 411.

§ *Ibid.*, I., 44.

|| Piozzi's *Anecdotes of the late Samuel Johnson*, 2nd ed. 1786, p. 29.

¶ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

** *Memoirs of Dr. Samuel Johnson* [by William Shaw], 1785, pp. 11-12.

he was a very good master," he told Boswell in 1772 ;* and as himself a firm believer in the necessity of the rod, especially in the hands of a teacher, he could not condemn Hunter's severity if he did condemn his injustice. "My master whipt me very well. Without that, Sir, I should have done nothing," he informed Bennet Langton to explain his accurate knowledge of Latin ; and further told him that Hunter, while "flogging his boys unmercifully," used to justify himself by ejaculating, "And this I do to save you from the gallows."† Taylor's evidence was that Hunter "was an excellent master,"‡ and if we judge him by results we cannot deny the efficacy of his system.

According to Tom Davies, who got his particulars of Garrick's early life from Johnson himself,§ there was another and more human side to Hunter's character :—

This gentleman was an odd mixture of the pedant and the sportsman ; for he was a very severe disciplinarian and a great setter of game. Happy was the boy who could slyly inform his offended master where a covey of partridges was to be found : this notice was a certain pledge of his pardon.||

The Rev. Samuel Hay Parker, who derived his information, through his mother, from Molly Aston and her sisters,¶ relates that "Hunter was a pompous man, and never entered the school without his gown and cassock, and his wig full dressed" ; and Johnson, who never forgot his master's "remarkably stern look," said that "he never taught a boy in his life—he whipped and they learned."**

Miss Seward, whose presence at times recalled her grandfather

* Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, II., 146.

† *Ibid.*, I., 45-6.

‡ *Ibid.*, I., 44.

§ *Memoirs of Life of David Garrick*, by Thomas Davies, 1784, vol. I., "advertisement" dated 1781.

|| *Ibid.*, I., 3-4.

¶ I have not been able to add much to my knowledge of the Parker family and its connexion with the Astons (see *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 282-3 ; *Johnsonian Gleanings*, ante, I., 4, and II., 110). But Mr. John Parker Hayes, of the *Daily Telegraph*, a grandson of the Rev. Samuel Hay Parker, made some family enquiries for me in 1912, and was told that the cleric's mother, Charlotte Bagnall, who is said to have been brought up by the Astons, was born in 1765, daughter of "Sir Richard Bagnall of Worcestershire" ; and that her husband, Samuel Hay Parker the elder, was connected in some way with the Court of the King of the Belgians. And Mr. Hayes's aunt, Miss Ellen S. Parker, told me that when her father was at Pembroke (1823-7), he occupied Johnson's old room.

** Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, II., 414.

Hunter's imperious dignity so strongly to Johnson as almost to make him tremble,* told her friend Dr. Whalley in 1781 that Hunter gave the bookseller's son his education "without the most distant idea of ever receiving a penny on his account," yet "took equal pains with him as with the sons of the wealthiest gentlemen."† But in a communication to John Nichols, after Johnson's death, she said that her "grandfather Hunter received as much for the education of Johnson as was paid for the children of *other* tradesmen."‡ So much for her value as a witness!

Though removed to the upper school, Johnson did not at first come much into contact with Hunter, for, with the rest of his class, he was put under the immediate care of "Holbrook, a peevish and ill-tempered man," as he calls him in his "Annals."§ This was the Rev. Edward Holbrooke, son of a Wolverhampton lawyer of the same names. Born in 1695, he took his B.A. from Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, in 1716, proceeding M.A. in 1721.|| He must have been appointed usher of Lichfield School soon after leaving the University. According to Dr. Taylor, Holbrooke was "one of the most ingenious men, best scholars, and best preachers of his age."¶ This does not quite agree with what Johnson tells us in his "Annals," that on one occasion the pupils saw that Holbrooke "did not know the meaning of *Uvæ Crispæ*" in one of the Helvicius dialogues; and that on another occasion, when doing Phædrus, they were sent up twice to Hunter to be punished. The first time they evidently took their punishment without protest; but the second time they "complained that they could not get the passage." When the headmaster sternly told them they should have asked, they replied that they "had asked, and that the assistant"—presumably Holbrooke—"would not tell

* Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, II., 414.

† *Whalley's Journal and Correspondence*, ed. Hill Wickham, 1863, vol. I., p. 346.

‡ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 210.

§ Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 138.

|| *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 244; *Johnsonian Gleanings*, ante, I., 34; II., 114. "Edwd., son of Mr. Edwd. Holbrook," was baptized at Wolverhampton on 6 Aug. 1695; and "John, son of Mr. Edwd. Holbrook, Attorney," on 25 June 1698. Edward's parentage is not given in the Corpus Christi admission books, only the county of his origin, Staffordshire, and the date of his entry, 1713. There is a note against the entry, "Prefer'd near Lichfield, and Usher of Stafford School" (*inf.* Mr. Gerald Mander, Compton, Wolverhampton, 1916).

¶ Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 44.

them.”* But probably Hunter thrashed them, just to be on the safe side. Holbrooke, it may be mentioned, became brother-in-law to Hunter, in 1723, by his marriage to Mrs. Hunter’s sister, Israel Norton.†

It was when doing his first exercise for Holbrooke, at home, that Johnson was originally led to perceive “the power of continuity of attention, of application not suffered to wander or to pause.” He was writing by the kitchen window, and thought himself alone. Turning his head he saw his cousin, Sally Ford,‡ dancing, but so engrossed was he with his task that not even that glad sight could distract his mind, and he went on quite oblivious to time and to Sally. He regretted that he had hardly ever been able to concentrate so closely on his work, at any time in his life.§ It may be mentioned here that the Johnsons, like other respectable tradesmen at that time, lived almost entirely in their basement kitchen,|| for the parlour fire was never lit except on Sundays. Only when tradesmen retired from business, or when there was some “great revolution of their life,” did they aspire to a parlour fire on weekdays.¶

In the upper school the pupils did not have those pleasant Thursdays and Saturdays devoted merely to examination.** On Thursday morning they had an ordinary lesson, while in the afternoon they did syntax. On Saturday morning they also did syntax. And instead of learning *Æsop*, as in the lower school, they were soon promoted to *Phædrus*, their portion of which they had to repeat to the dreaded Hunter on Friday afternoon. *Phædrus* was the only book they learned to the end, thirty lines constituting one dose in the latter part. Johnson observed that “what reconciles masters to long lessons is the pleasure of tasking.”††

Monday and Wednesday afternoons were devoted to *Helvicus*,‡‡ which they found very difficult and learned “a long time with very little progress.” Indeed Hawkins, who still took them sometimes, instructed them to omit the dialogue *Vestitus*, “as being one of the hardest in the book.” There were two other of the dialogues which

* Birkbeck Hill’s *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 140.

† *Johnsonian Gleanings*, ante, II., 114.

‡ See ante, p. 107.

§ Birkbeck Hill’s *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 139–40.

|| See ante, p. 89.

¶ Birkbeck Hill’s *Boswell*, V., 60.

** See ante, p. 85.

†† Birkbeck Hill’s *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 140.

‡‡ Christopher Helvicus [1581–1617], German philologist.

they began, "and were ordered not to pursue." It was in the upper school that he first began to "point," or punctuate, his exercises, which the class did at noon.*

At the Whitsuntide which witnessed Johnson's transition to the upper school, an unidentified Mrs. Longworth† brought him a *Hermes Garretsoni*.‡ But it did not prove of much use to him; and "was afterwards lost, or stolen at school." On one occasion he did the whole of twenty-five exercises, while other boys did only sixteen; but he did not show them all to the master, and "five lay long after in a drawer in the shop." He made the first exercise in quite a short time, and showed it proudly to his mother. But he did not get on so quickly with the remainder, and his mother remarked:—"Though you could make an exercise in so short a time, I thought you would find it difficult to make them all as soon as you should."§

In 1719, too, there is evidence of Michael Johnson's continued activity in his legitimate trade, for in that year there was printed for him *An Exposition of the Revelations*, by Sir John Floyer,|| who had a turn for theology.

From Edmund Hector, Boswell derived his general account of Johnson's progress at Lichfield School, and of how he was regarded by his fellow-pupils. The following is the account "in the rough," as jotted down in Boswell's notebook:—

Mr. Hector Surgeon at Birmingham who was at school with him and used to buy tarts with him of Dame Reid,¶ told me that he had the same extraordinary superiority over the boys of the same age with himself that he has now over men. That he seemed to learn by intuition the contents of any book. That the boys submitted to him and paid him great respect. Three of them of whom Hector was sometimes one used to carry him to School.** One stooped and let him sit upon his back; and one on each side bore him up. That he used to have oatmeal porridge for breakfast.††

* Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 140.

† *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 231-2.

‡ See *ante*, p. 84.

§ Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 138-9.

|| *Notes and Queries*, 3rd Series, IV., 388; Rupert Simms's *Bibliotheca Staffordiensis*, p. 173. Concerning Sir John Floyer, see *ante*, p. 66.

¶ I have not identified this lady, but can safely wager that her name was "Read." In writing "Reid," Boswell was only revealing his own nationality.

** The Grammar School was about a quarter of a mile distant from the Johnsons' house.

†† See *ante*, p. 103, concerning his liking for dry oatmeal.

Mr. Hector told me he had many of Dr. Johnson's *Juvenilia*, little things written when he was very young and had copied them fairly for preservation.*

When he came to write the *Life*, Boswell had more of Hector's reminiscences to record, clearly derived from Hawkins, who had quoted *verbatim* Hector's written account of their schooldays. From this account it appears that his being "borne triumphant" to school in the morning, which Boswell says as "a proof of the early predominance of intellectual vigour is very remarkable, and does honour to human nature,"† was more a "boyish piece of flattery to gain his assistance." "His uncommon abilities for learning far exceeded" theirs, and his assistance was therefore decidedly useful. He never joined them in their games "except in the winter, when the ice was firm, to be drawn along by a boy bare-footed"‡—"by a garter fixed round him," as Boswell says, adding that it was "no very easy operation, as his size was remarkably large." Too blind to take part in ordinary sports, he once jocularly remarked on "how wonderfully well he had contrived to be idle without them."§ And in spite of his great "ambition to excel," "his application to books, as far as it appeared, was very trifling." His delight on holidays was to saunter in the fields with Hector, while "more engaged in talking to himself than his companion."|| His "dismal inertness of disposition,"¶ and his dislike of regular tasks, said Hector, caused him to "procrastinate his exercises to the last hour":—

I have known him, after a long vacation, in which we were rather severely tasked, return to school an hour earlier in the morning, and begin one of his exercises, in which he purposely left some faults, in order to gain time to finish the rest. I never knew him corrected at school, unless it was for talking and diverting other boys from their business,** by which, perhaps, he might hope to keep his ascendancy.

* Adam's *Facsimile of Boswell's Notebook*.

† Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 47-8.

‡ Hawkins's *Life of Johnson*, 1787, p. 7.

§ Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 48. In 1783 he told Boswell that "had I been an Indian, I must have died early; my eyes would not have served me to get food." *Ibid.*, IV., 210.

|| Hawkins's *Life of Johnson*, 1787, p. 7.

¶ Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 48.

** It was conduct of this sort, no doubt, which constituted the "idleness" for which Sir John Eardley Wilmot remembered him to have been punished by Hunter; see *post*, p. 122.

He had a very inquiring mind, and a "memory so tenacious, that whatever he read or heard he never forgot." On one occasion Hector recited eighteen verses, which Johnson repeated *verbatim*, making only one variation, and that an improvement.* His scholarship was the standard by which the abilities of other pupils were gauged; and, as related later on, it was only of one, Theophilus Lowe, that they said he was "as good a scholar as Johnson."†

In conversation with Boswell, in 1763, Johnson "maintained that a boy at school was the happiest of human beings."‡ This, of course, is a fiction propagated by all old or elderly people. That he himself indulged in some of the active amusements of the ordinary schoolboy is suggested by the story of his successfully setting himself, three years before he died, to jump over a rail in Levett's Field, which he used to clear with ease some sixty years before. Levett's Field was at the back of the Grammar School, and was used by the scholars at that time as a playground. The mere sight of the rail had filled him with rapture, "for it brought to his mind all his juvenile sports and pastimes."§ The Rev. Mr. Parker tells a tale of a large party at Stowe Hill being kept waiting for dinner because Johnson "had a mind to try whether he could climb a gate now as he used to do when he was a lad."|| And Kearsley, in his "Anecdotes," says that, when visiting Lichfield, "he used sometimes to recall the memory of past times, and enter into all the boyish sports and gambols of his youth," while only a few years before his death "he obliged the master¶ of the school where he had been educated, to restore to the boys, an annual entertainment of *Furmenti*, which had been practised in his days, but had for some time been discontinued." "Furmenty," by Johnson's own definition, was "food made by boiling wheat in milk," and used to be eaten on Mid-Lent Sunday and Christmas Eve.** We have Dr. Thomas Campbell's authority for Johnson having admitted to Boswell that he had been under a dancing master, "and a dancing

* Hawkins's *Life of Johnson*, 1787, pp. 7-8.

† Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 48; and *post*, p. 125.

‡ *Ibid.*, I., 451.

§ Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, II., 395-6.

|| *Ibid.*, II., 415.

¶ Thomas Price was headmaster from 1764 to 1776, and John Harrison from 1776 to 1791 (Harwood's *Lichfield*, 499).

** Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, II., 163.

mistress too," but that his "blind eyes" made him give it up after one or two lessons.*

From every point of view it is to be regretted that the "Annals," with their curiously prosaic recital of all the little happenings of his childhood, do not carry us beyond 1719, so that of the remaining five or more years that Johnson spent at Lichfield school we have no chronological record of any kind. Indeed, we possess practically no record either of his own or his parents' doings during this important period of his life, except Hector's memories, which throw only a general light upon Johnson's precocity, his curious oscillation between indolence and energy, his phenomenal powers of memory, and his supremacy, alike physical and mental, over his school-fellows,† which was such, according to Hawkins, that the seniors in the school "looked on him as their head and leader, and readily acquiesced in whatever he proposed or did."‡ It must have been a difficult task getting him to school in the morning, for he confessed in 1775 that "his life had, from his earliest years, been wasted in a morning bed."§

According to Hawkins, Johnson, when a schoolboy, was given a guinea by the Earl of Berkshire—"who was a good scholar, and had always a Horace in his pocket"—for some Latin verses of his own composition.|| One might wonder how he could have come into contact with the Earl of Berkshire at that time. But the tale accords well with facts, for Henry Bowes Howard, who succeeded his great-uncle as fourth Earl of Berkshire in 1706, inherited the manor and estate of Elford, close to Lichfield, through his father, Craven Howard, having in 1683 married Mary, the daughter and heir of George Bowes, of Elford. Lord Berkshire was evidently living at Elford at the time of Johnson's schooling, for he had children baptized there in 1717¶ and 1721;** and his sister Mary Howard died there in 1724.†† Perhaps, as a local big-wig, who also held the office of Deputy-Earl-Marshal,‡‡ he was one of the patrons of the school.

* Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, II., 52.

† See *ante*, p. 115-16.

‡ Hawkins's *Life of Johnson*, 1787, p. 6.

§ Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 72.

|| Hawkins's *Life of Johnson*, 1787, p. 38.

¶ Shaw's *Staffordshire*, I., 381, 387.

** Rupert Simms's *Bibliotheca Staffordiensis*, under Hon. Thomas Howard.

†† Shaw's *Staffordshire*, I., 385.

‡‡ He was Deputy-Earl-Marshal 1718-25; Recorder of Lichfield, 1755; succeeded his cousin as Earl of Suffolk in 1745; and died 1757 (G. E. C.'s *Complete Peerage*).

On 30th December 1721, St. Mary's Church, which had been in the hands of the builders since 1716,* was reopened for divine service,† and the Johnsons were able to come back and get one of the new seats.‡ Mr. Baker took a most appropriate text on this occasion :—"Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the offices thereof" (*Nehemiah* XIII. 14).§ Samuel Johnson was now left with no excuse for escaping into the fields on a Sunday,|| and himself became a church-goer again. But his heart was not in his observances, and though his thoughts were not actually hostile towards religion, he became, like many other clever youths in the making, "a sort of lax talker against" it, until he went up to Oxford some seven years later, where such loose talk was not permitted.¶

It was in or about 1724 that Catherine Chambers, the beloved and trusted servant and friend of the Johnsons for some forty-three years, came to live with them : she was then a girl of fifteen and so the same age as Samuel.**

In 1725 Michael Johnson was again in trouble over his tanning.†† A letter written by the Commissioners of Excise, in July of that year, to the local officer at Lichfield, reveals to us that he had only quite recently been prosecuted. Replying to that officer's letter to them of five days earlier—very prompt work on the part of a government office—they said that

since the justices would not give judgment against Mr. Michael Johnson, the tanner, notwithstanding the facts were fairly against him, the Board direct that the next time he offends, you do not lay an information against him : but send an affidavit of the fact, that he may be prosecuted in the Exchequer.‡‡

It is refreshing, after the sour officialism of this document, to turn over the pages of the great *Dictionary*, and learn that "Excise is a hateful tax," adjudged "by wretches hired by those to whom excise

* See *ante*, pp. 80-1.

† Harwood's *Lichfield*, p. 460 ; Shaw's *Staffordshire*, I., 335.

‡ In 1721 the Corporation made an order for the disposing of the seats in the new church. Harwood's *Lichfield*, p. 469.

§ John Jackson's *History of Lichfield*, 1795, p. 45 ; Shaw's *Staffordshire*, I., 335.

|| See *ante*, p. 81.

¶ Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 67-8.

** *Ibid.*, II., 43 ; *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 242.

†† See *ante*, pp. 89-95.

‡‡ Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 37.

is paid " ; or to read in *The Idler* that a commissioner of excise is one of " the two lowest of all human beings."* We may well smile at the savage ferocity of these definitions, which would translate a burning personal grievance into wholesale condemnation of a body of men probably not much better or worse than their fellows.

The Commissioners' letter makes it pretty clear that local opinion, as represented by the justices, was with Michael ; and it is interesting to remark that in this case, as in the previous case of 1717-18, legal or official persecution was followed immediately by civic honours,† for in 1725 he was elected Senior Bailiff of Lichfield.‡ It was about this very time, in September 1725, that Michael received £100 in cash, for his own use, in consequence of a partial squaring up of the trust created under his marriage settlement—a squaring up which involved the surrendering of his house in the Market Square to trustees.§

* *The Idler*, No. 65.

† See *ante*, p. 91.

‡ Harwood's *Lichfield*, pp. 432, 449.

§ See *ante*, p. 49.

CHAPTER VI

SCHOOLFELLOWS AT THE GRAMMAR SCHOOL

No formal school records—Chief Justice Eardley Wilmot—William Noel, Justice of the Common Pleas—Sir Thomas Parker, Chief Baron—Chief Justice Willes a pupil before Johnson's time—Thomas Newton, Bishop of Bristol—Isaac Hawkins Browne, the poet—Robert James, of "fever-powder" fame—Dr. John Taylor, the worldly cleric—Edmund Hector, the Birmingham surgeon—Johnson's great school rival: Theophilus Lowe, Canon of Windsor—Charles Congreve, Archdeacon of Armagh—The Rev. Richard Congreve—Gilbert Repington and his brother John—Andrew Corbet—Joseph Addison and the "barring-out" at Lichfield—Bowyer Sneyd, uncle to Honora—A humble schoolfellow, Harry Jackson—Dr. Caleb Hardinge: a caustic wit—The Butt family—David and Peter Garrick—The Bailyes—Joseph Simpson not his contemporary at school—Hunter's remarkable record of distinguished pupils—Social status of the scholars—Celebrated alumni of Lichfield School before Johnson's day, Joseph Addison, Elias Ashmole, William Wollaston, Gregory King, Bishop Smalridge, John Colson, and John Rowley—Unidentified friends of Johnson's boyhood.

IT is to be regretted that no old records of Lichfield Grammar School are known to exist, so that we cannot reconstruct its history as we should wish, or learn the names of Johnson's fellow-pupils except in the case of the small proportion who achieved some eminence, or maintained friendship with him in after life. But even with no more help than that indicated we can put together a list of his schoolfellows which is of very considerable interest.

The nearest to him in point of age was John Eardley Wilmot, afterwards knighted and Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, who was just about a month his senior.* Wilmot came to Lichfield from Derby

* Wilmot's christening was probably a brighter affair than Johnson's. Under date of 5 Sept. 1709 (two days before Johnson's birth—see *ante*, p. 51) his grandmother, Lady Marow, wrote as follows to her daughter, Lady Kaye:—"I have sent you the enclosed from Betty, which son Knightley brought when he came to be godfather. The

School,* and left at the end of 1723, when he passed on to Westminster School.† He does not seem to have consorted with Johnson, though in after life—and he survived the lexicographer some eight years—he could recollect him well, and often mentioned him as “a long, lank,‡ lounging boy, whom he distinctly remembered to have been punished by Hunter for idleness.”§ Hunter’s severity does not appear to have left an unfavourable impression on Wilmot, else he would not have laid it down in after life that discipline was the first and foremost thing to be inculcated by a schoolmaster.||

Hunter is specially to be remarked because of the number of distinguished lawyers whom he educated. Another of eminence was William Noel, Justice of the Common Pleas. Born in 1695, Noel was admitted to the Inner Temple early in 1716,¶ and he must have left the school some years before Johnson entered it. It may be mentioned that this Noel was nephew to Frances Noel, who married Sir Charles Skrymsher,** and uncle to the Rev. Rowney Noel, Dean of Salisbury, who married Maria Boothby Skrymsher, sister of Mrs. Hugo Meynell.††

Sir Thomas Parker, Chief Baron, born about the same time as William Noel, was another of Hunter’s pupils, but he left to enter the office of a London solicitor‡‡ when Johnson would be a mere baby.

child’s name John Eardley ; christened in the afternoon, at church ; no entertainment, but jelly, biscuits, cake, and wafers ; all these in great abundance, with wine and gossiping cup” (*Hist. MSS. Commission, 15th Report, Appendix I., p. 148*).

* Where Anthony Blackwall was then headmaster ; see *Dict. Nat. Biog.* A “John Wilmott” carved his name on the school wall in 1714 (B. Tachella’s *Derby School Register, 1902, p. 11*).

† *Memoirs of Life of Sir John Eardley Wilmot, 1802, p. 3* ; and *Dict. Nat. Biog.* He was admitted to Westminster in Jan. 1723/4, aged 14 (*inf. Mr. G. F. Russell Barker*).

‡ Contrary to popular belief, Johnson does not seem to have been fat, either as a boy or a young man. Lucy Porter told Boswell that as a young man he was “lean and lank, so that his immense structure of bones was hideously striking to the eye” (*Birkbeck Hill’s Boswell, I., 94*). Bishop Percy even discounted the description of his “corpulency” in later years. “If he appeared a little unwieldy, it was owing to the defect of his sight, and not from corpulency” (*Robert Anderson’s Life of Johnson, 1815, p. 468*).

§ Campbell’s *Lives of the Chief Justices, II., 280*. And see *ante, p. 116*.

¶ *Memoirs of Life of Sir John Eardley Wilmot, 1802, p. 69*. ¶ *Dict. Nat. Biog.*

** See *ante, pp. 22, 24, and Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson’s Ancestry,*

p. 254.

†† See *ante, p. 25, and Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson’s Ancestry, pp. 262, 264.*

‡‡ *Dict. Nat. Biog.*

According to Lord Campbell,* Sir John Willes, Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, was also a victim of Hunter's discipline, but as he was born in 1685 and went up to Oxford in 1700†, he must have been, of course, one of Robert Shaw's pupils.‡ Willes was a son of the Rev. John Willes, who purchased the Winson Green estate of Johnson's great-uncle, Henry Ford, in 1683.§

Thomas Newton, Bishop of Bristol, was nearly six years older than Johnson, yet may have seen him enter Lichfield School, which he himself did not leave for Westminster till 1717.|| His father, John Newton, a wine merchant in Lichfield,¶ was a personal friend of Johnson's godfather, Richard Wakefield,** and the Bishop, like Johnson, received a legacy of £5 under Wakefield's will in 1733.†† In his old age Johnson still spoke of the Bishop as "Tom," though not with much affection.‡‡

The only poet whom Johnson could claim as a schoolfellow seems to have been Isaac Hawkins Browne the elder, who was close on five years his senior. Like John Eardley Wilmot and Thomas Newton, he passed on to Westminster,§§ and thence, in 1721, to Trinity College, Cambridge.|||| We do not know to what extent he maintained a friendship in after life with Johnson: we only know that Johnson described him as the most delightful converser with whom he was

* *Lives of the Chief Justices*, II., 279.

† *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 129.

‡ See *ante*, p. 110.

§ See *ante*, p. 33.

|| *Dict. Nat. Biog.* He was admitted to Westminster in June 1717, aged 13 (*inf.* Mr. G. F. Russell Barker).

¶ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 200. At the time of the Lichfield census of 1695 (see *ante*, p. 18), the Bishop's father was living with his widowed mother in Bird Street:—"Mary Newton, Widdow, 55; Susan Newton, 15, Rebecca Newton, 12, her Daught^{rs}; Comfort Sole, 26, Edw^d Richards, 16, servt^s; John Newton, batchelor, 24 years; Joseph Cooke, batchelor, 25 years; Humphery Smithyman, 20, John Sharratt, 18, journeymen."

** See *ante*, p. 55.

†† *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 227, 229. The Bishop's legacy was five guineas.

‡‡ Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, IV., 285-6.

§§ The existing admission registers of Westminster School do not begin till 1715, so as Browne's name does not occur in them the supposition is that he entered before that year. There is a "Brown" in the Under-School lists 1715-19, who probably was Isaac Hawkins Browne (*inf.* Mr. G. F. Russell Barker).

|||| *Dict. Nat. Biog.*

ever in company.* He died comparatively early, in 1760, leaving a son, Isaac Hawkins Browne the younger, with whom we know Johnson dined in 1784.†

Distinguished in quite another way was Robert James, the inventor of the celebrated "fever-powders" bearing his name. Born at Kinvaston, near Wolverhampton, about 1705, son of Edward James, of Shenstone, just outside Lichfield,‡ he was much of an age with Hawkins Browne. Boswell alludes to him more than once as Johnson's schoolfellow,§ and the friendship begun in early life was maintained when both were men of established reputation. They can scarcely have been very intimate at school, for when James left for Oxford, near the end of 1722,|| Johnson was only a boy of thirteen. Yet he told Mrs. Thrale that Dr. James knew his "very early days better" even than Taylor.¶

That James should know more of Johnson's early life than Taylor, his lifelong intimate, seems curious, but perhaps it is explained by the fact that James lived close to Lichfield, whereas John Taylor belonged to Ashburne, in Derbyshire, and so would only be one of Hunter's boarders—in the city during term-time, but not of it. Only eighteen months the junior of Johnson,** Taylor would be much more his contemporary than was James, and to him Boswell went for particulars of Lichfield School in Johnson's time.†† Of all Johnson's schoolfellows, Dr. Taylor, the embodiment of clerical worldliness, is most vividly known to us, by reason of the close friendship they maintained for so long in spite of radical differences in character and outlook.

Less known than Dr. James or Dr. Taylor, but very dear to Johnson, was Edmund Hector, the Birmingham surgeon at whose

* Piozzi's *Anecdotes of the late Samuel Johnson*, 2nd ed., 1786, p. 173.

† Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, IV., 272.

‡ *Dict. Nat. Biog.*; *The Pedigree Register*, No. 1, June 1907, pp. 14-16. The *Dict. Nat. Biog.* tells us nothing of Robert James's wife, but *The Pedigree Register* says she was "Anne, dau. of . . . Stephens, Sister of John Stephens." The Rev. F. A. Homer, however, sends me this marriage at St. Philip's, Birmingham :—"1737. Aug. 15, Dr. Robert James and Mrs. Ann Clare."

§ Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 159; III., 4.

|| Foster's *Alumni Oxonienses*.

¶ Piozzi's *Anecdotes of the late Samuel Johnson*, 2nd ed., 1786, p. 32.

** *Dict. Nat. Biog.*; and *Life of Dr. John Taylor of Ashburne*, by Thomas Taylor, M.A., F.S.A.

†† Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 44-5.

house he often stayed.* Member of a well-known Lichfield family,† and nephew to the George Hector who ushered Johnson into the world,‡ we may look upon Edmund Hector as his chief friend at school. In 1781 he wrote of Hector as “the only companion of my childhood that passed through the School with me,” and added:—“We have always loved one another.”§ More than to anyone else, Boswell was indebted to him for particulars of Johnson's early life.|| A year or two older than Johnson, Hector yet lived to read Boswell's great biography, and to send him written thanks “for the great and long continued entertainment” it had afforded him.¶ George Hector, cousin of Edmund, was also with them at Lichfield School, but we know nothing personal of him except that he had never been taught his Catechism.** Edmund's sister, Ann, was that dear old gentlewoman, Mrs. Carless, whom Johnson described as “the first woman with whom I was in love,” and for whom he always retained much tenderness.††

It is rather curious to reflect that the only pupil who was reckoned to be “as good a scholar as Johnson”—though Johnson did “not think he was as good a scholar”‡‡—was one who rose to no real eminence. This was Theophilus Lowe, one of the despised “town-boys,”§§ son of a plumber in Lichfield and grandson of an innkeeper there.|||| He had the advantage of over eighteen months in age,¶¶ and in June 1725 entered St. John's College, Cambridge, where he won a Fellowship in 1733. He acted as tutor to the first Marquess Townshend and his celebrated brother Charles, and from their father received preferments in Norfolk, dying a Canon of Windsor in 1769. His scholarship does not seem to have disturbed his contemporaries; but his friend Bishop Newton,** who married his cousin's widow,††† described him as a cheerful and amiable man of most estimable character, with a “strong

* See Hill and Dent's *Memorials of the Old Square* (Birmingham), 1897, pp. 25-33.

† *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 152-4.

‡ See *ante*, p. 53.

§ Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 101. As we know from Hawkins, Hector was “many years in the same class” as Johnson (*Life of Johnson*, 1787, p. 7).

|| Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, II., 459.

¶ *Ibid.*, IV., 375.

** See *ante*, p. 85.

†† Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, II., 459-61.

†† *Ibid.*, I., 48.

§§ See *ante*, p. 110.

|||| *Johnsonian Gleanings*, *ante*, I., 35-6.

¶¶ *Ibid.*, II., 115.

*** See *ante*, p. 123.

††† See *post*, IV., Appendix M.

understanding improved by reading," who wrote excellent letters.* There is no record of any association between Johnson and Theophilus† Lowe after their school days.

Another man of some note who was Johnson's schoolfellow was Charles Congreve, who became Chaplain to Archbishop Boulter and Archdeacon of Armagh. A year or so older than Johnson, he left Lichfield School for Magdalen Hall, Oxford, in March 1725/6, while Johnson was at Stourbridge,‡ and took his degree in 1729,§ after Johnson had gone up to Pembroke. According to Taylor, Congreve was in the same form with Johnson,|| who alluded to him in 1776, in a letter to Edmund Hector, as "our schoolfellow."¶ In the later years of his life, Congreve relapsed, with the help of at least "one bottle of port every day,"** into an almost comatose state of mind and body, and Johnson's attempts to liven him up were quite unavailing.†† He

* *Johnsonian Gleanings*, ante, I., 36.

† The curious frequency of the name *Theophilus* among Lichfield people at this time calls for some remark. In addition to Theophilus Lowe, his cousin Theophila Hand, and her son Theophilus Buckeridge (see *post*, IV., Appendix M), we find Theophilus Howard (*ibid.*, App. G), Theophilus Levett (see *post*, p. 176), and Theophilus Rider (Harwood's *Lichfield*, p. 246), while Robert Porter of Lichfield and Sarah Sheldon his wife (see *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 179, 248-9, where I have wrongly described Sheldon Porter as son of John, instead of Robert Porter—John was brother to Sheldon) had a son Theophilus Porter [1706-28]. The Lichfield census of 1695 (see *ante*, p. 18) shows a Theophilus Bott, aged 35, living in Sandford Street with his wife, daughter and widowed mother. The only explanation I can offer is that the name reflects local regard for Sir Theophilus Biddulph [d. 1683], 1st bart., whose seat of Elmhurst was close to Lichfield; he was a benefactor to Lichfield (Harwood's *Lichfield*, pp. 59, 469, 506-7, 514), and lies buried in St. Chad's Church (*ibid.*, pp. 475, 508). John Hackett [1592-1670], the celebrated Bishop of Lichfield, had a daughter Theophila, married to Francis Dives in 1665 (Harwood's *Lichfield*, p. 298).

The Lichfield census of 1695 shows Lowe's grandfather as living in Beacon Street :—"Xopher Lowe, 56; Anne his wife, 57; Geo: his son, 15; Elizab: Brindley his mayd, 20." But his father was already apprenticed, and living with his master in Market Street :—"Wm. Hollis, 57; Esther his wife, 49; Xopher Lowe, App^r, 19; Barbara Deakin, serv^t, 24; Wm. Porter, sojourner, 16." The grandfather in his will in 1704 referred to "my mother, Isabel Richards." She was living in Beacon Street in 1695 :—"Isabell Richards, widow, 70; William Allsop, 38; Mary his wife, 32; Elizab. Gilford, spinster, 66."

‡ See *post*, p. 153.

§ Foster's *Alumni Oxonienses*.

|| Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 45.

¶ *Letters of Samuel Johnson*, ed. Birkbeck Hill, I., 378; and see Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, II., 40, 42.

** Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, II., 460; and *Letters of Samuel Johnson*, ed. Birkbeck Hill, I., 315.

†† *Letters of Samuel Johnson*, ed. Birkbeck Hill, I., 304-5, 378-9.

never spoke to Johnson "of any old companions or past occurrences," and mention of the name of their common schoolfellow Hector aroused in him no interest whatsoever. When Johnson asked him, in 1774, how long it was since they themselves had met, Congreve answered, "roundly, fifty years." It therefore seems that they never met at Oxford; indeed, on the same occasion he asked Johnson at which University he was bred, as he had forgotten.* Truly an inspiring friend with whom to review the past!

Charles Congreve had a younger brother Richard, some four and a half years Johnson's junior,† who was in all probability another fellow-pupil. Richard went up to Christ Church in March, 1732¹/₃, and took his degree in 1736.‡ In June 1735 Johnson wrote to him at Christ Church, as "an old Acquaintance," alluding to "our former familiarity," and to themselves as "Friends that have been long separated." Their friendship in early days "was embarrass'd with no forms, and we were content to love without complimenting each other," as befitted "our rural Retreats." Johnson invites him to renew the acquaintance, "if in your early life you received any pleasure from my conversation."§ Twenty years later, in 1755, Johnson wrote to Richard Congreve, now a clergyman living at Leacroft, near Cannock, a letter which breathes a touchingly strong regard for the friends of his youth, and a real delight at "the revival of old friendships."||

Charles and Richard were born at Stretton, near Penkridge, sons of John Congreve, of Congreve, "descended"—in Johnson's own words—"from a family in Staffordshire of so great antiquity that it claims a place among the few that extend their line beyond the Norman Conquest."¶ John Congreve was first cousin to William Congreve, the dramatist; and Richard eventually inherited the family estate and ancestorized the present Congreves of Burton Manor, in Wirral. It is an astonishing fact that his only daughter, who as far as chronology goes might just as well have been Johnson's daughter, did not die

* *Letters of Samuel Johnson*, ed. Birkbeck Hill, I., 305.

† He was born 13 May 1714, and died 27 July 1782 (Ormerod's *Cheshire*, ed. Helsby, II., 555).

‡ Foster's *Alumni Oxonienses*.

§ *The Athenæum*, 8 May, 1909, pp. 559-60.

|| *Ibid.*, 23 May 1908, p. 638.

¶ *Johnson's Lives of the Poets*, ed. Birkbeck Hill, II., 212.

until 1871 ; the lives of father and child thus covered a space of 157 years.*

We are on safe ground in the case of Gilbert Repington, to whom Johnson, as "a former Schoolfellow," wrote in May 1735.† Gilbert was then with Richard Congreve at Christ Church, which he had entered the year before at the age of twenty-one, he being thus about four years Johnson's junior. Late in going up to Oxford, he was also long in taking his degree, which he did not do till 1740.‡ In Johnson's letter there is an allusion to Gilbert's brother, who had promised to do him a service : this no doubt was John Repington, who entered Exeter College in July 1729, aged eighteen,§ and who very likely had also been a schoolfellow. These brothers were sons of Gilbert Repington, of Tamworth, in Warwickshire,|| by Jane his wife, daughter of Sir Thomas Vernon.¶ Their elder brother, Edward, who succeeded to the family estates in 1734, married a daughter of Theophilus Levett, of Wichnor,** whose Johnsonian associations are dealt with elsewhere.††

Any full discussion of the part that Andrew Corbet played in shaping Johnson's university career belongs to a later period of his life. But there seems no reason to doubt Hawkins's statement that he "had been educated in the same school with Johnson"‡‡ ; for when Boswell, quoting Dr. Taylor, alluded to "a gentleman of Shropshire, one of his schoolfellows," §§ he clearly referred to Andrew Corbet, who, it may be mentioned, was almost exactly of an age with Johnson. ||| And Johnson himself, in his life of Joseph Addison, whose father, when appointed Dean of Lichfield in 1683, placed him at school there under Robert Shaw, ¶¶ repeats

* She was Marianne Congreve, of Iscoyd Park, Flintshire ; born 2 Feb. 1780, died June 1871 (Ormerod's *Cheshire*, ed. Helsby, II., 555).

† *The Athenæum*, 4 Sept. 1909, pp. 265-6.

‡ Foster's *Alumni Oxonienses*.

§ *Ibid.*

|| *Ibid.*

¶ Burke's *Commoners*, II., 475, where Gilbert, the father, is described as "of London."

** *Ibid.*, loc. cit.

†† See *post*, p. 176.

‡‡ Hawkins's *Life of Johnson*, 1787, p. 9.

§§ Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 58.

||| "Andrew, son of Roger Corbett, Esq., by Elizabeth," was baptized at Battlefield, Shropshire, 2 Nov. 1709. "Mr. Roger Corbett of this Parish and Mrs. Elizabeth Edwards of the parish of St. Chadd in Salop," were married there 5 Mch. 1697 (*Parish Register Society*, vol. 19). See *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 230-1.

¶¶ See *ante*, p. 110.

a story of a *barring-out*, told me, when I was a boy by Andrew Corbet of Shropshire, who had heard it from Mr. Pigot his uncle. . . . The master, when Pigot was a schoolboy, was *barred-out* at Lichfield; and the whole operation, as he said, was planned and conducted by Addison.*

This uncle of Corbet's was the Rev. Dryden Piggott, who entered Queen's College, Oxford, in December 1685, aged 17, and became Rector of Edgmond, Shropshire, in 1699; † he married Corbet's mother's sister. ‡ Hawkins tells us that Corbet's father arranged for Johnson to accompany his son to Oxford; § but Corbet's father had been dead many years then, and his mother died eight months after he entered the University.||

Certainly one of Johnson's fellow-pupils, though some eight years his senior, was Bowyer Sneyd, who was bred at Lichfield under Hunter, and in December 1719 entered St. John's College, Cambridge. ¶ Uncle to the beautiful Honora Sneyd, as well as to the John Sneyd who married Miss Mary Adey,** he died unmarried without achieving any eminence.

But Johnson's schoolfellows were not all scholars, or sons of county gentlemen. He retained through life a great regard, which Boswell could not understand, for one Harry Jackson, who "seemed to be a low man, dull and untaught." When he dined with Johnson

* *Johnson's Lives of the Poets*, ed. Birkbeck Hill, II., 80. A different complexion is put upon what was probably the same incident by the Rev. Philip Hacket, who heard the tale from his grandmother, a relative of Addison's:—"On some considerable revolt or commotion of the great boys of the school, when all was desperate, and the boys flying off in detachments, young Addison reduced them; shewed the necessity of obeying the master and governor in all things that appertained to their improvement; and made such an excuse for their rebellion, that he was ever after regarded as prime minister; admirably foretelling the public office he so well filled under the Queen, with such splendid abilities, though no fine orator" (Nichols's *Leicestershire*, III., 238). Mr. Hacket was not an unimpeachable witness (see *post*, p. 134), but his version of the story seems more probable than that related (with some reserve) by Johnson.

† Foster's *Alumni Oxonienses*.

‡ "The Rev. Mr. Dryden Piggot, Rector of Edgmond, and Mrs. Eleanor Edwards, of the Parish of St. Chadd in Salop," were married 27 Nov. 1705 at Battlefield (*Parish Register Society*, vol. 19).

§ Hawkins's *Life of Johnson*, 1787, p. 9.

|| "Roger Corbett, Esq.," was buried at Battlefield, 12 Aug. 1715; "Mrs. Elizabeth Corbett, widow," on 13 Jan'y. 1727/8; and "Andrew Corbett Esq. of y^e Parish of St. Mary," on 21 Apl. 1741 (*Parish Register Society*, vol. 19).

¶ *Admissions to St. John's College, Cambridge*, Part III., ed. R. F. Scott, pp. 21, 329.

** See *ante*, p. 69.

and Boswell at Lichfield in 1776 he had a "coarse grey coat, black waistcoat, greasy leather breeches, and a yellow uncurled wig," as well as a ruddy countenance which Boswell, no mean judge, attributed to ale. He was a failure in life; after unsuccessful attempts to establish himself as a cutler in Birmingham, he returned to Lichfield, to live in poverty. But Johnson, to whom old associations counted for so much, treated him with the greatest consideration, and when he died, in 1777, mourned the loss of "one of the companions of my childhood." One Sedgwick, who "had a dropsy" in 1776, Johnson linked with Harry Jackson, as one of "the friends of his youth," so probably he was a schoolfellow too.*

In the same breath in which he speaks of Jackson and Sedgwick as friends of his youth, he also alludes to the death of "poor Caled [*sic*] Harding," and asks his old schoolfellow, Dr. Taylor, to whom he is writing:—"Do's [*sic*] not every death of a man long known begin to strike deep?"† It is clear that "Harding" had been a lifelong friend of both Johnson and Taylor—a schoolfellow, too, one might gather—which makes it curious that we have no other allusion to him in Johnsonian literature, and that, even in connexion with this allusion, his identity has not been revealed to us.‡ For Dr. Caleb Hardinge, son of the Rev. Gideon Hardinge, Vicar of Kingston, Surrey; brother of Nicholas Hardinge, an eminent classical scholar who held some high public appointments; and great-uncle

* *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 188. Wenlock Sedgwick, of Pelsall, and Martha Dring, were married 20 Apl. 1708 at St. Mary's, Lichfield; while Henry, son of Wenlock Sedgwick, was baptized there 28 April 1709, little more than four months before Johnson. Admon. of goods of Mr. Wenlock Sedgwick, late of Wade Street, Lichfield, was granted 30 July 1716, at Lichfield, to Martha Sedgwick, the relict; inventory dated 8 Dec. 1715, taken by Tho. Browne (see *ante*, p. 79) and Wm. Eldridge, total £7 7s. 6d. These Sedgwicks belonged to Sutton Coldfield, where the registers contain numerous entries relating to them. One Wenlock, son of Henry Sedgwick, was baptized there as early as 22 Mch. 1605/6. Mr. Homer tells me that the Wolverhampton manor rolls show that Wenlock Sedgwick, of the Wild Green, Sutton Coldfield, surrenders to his son and heir, Henry Sedgwick, gent., in Apl. 1683; that Wenlock Sedgwick, of Pelsall, baker, surrenders in 1693; and that James Sedgwick, of Little Aston, gent., releases land in Pelsall to his brother Wenlock Sedgwick in 1694. The Sutton Coldfield registers show their long connexion with Wild Green. There were no Sedgwicks in Lichfield in 1695 (see *ante*, p. 18).

† *Letters of Samuel Johnson*, ed. Birkbeck Hill, I., 375.

‡ Dr. Birkbeck Hill did not attempt to identify him, and in reprinting his name as "Caled" simply said, "a misprint, I conjecture, for Caleb."

of Henry, first Viscount Hardinge, was a man of note in his day.* Sufficiently distinguished in his profession to be made a Royal Physician, his interests were yet not confined; and he seems to have been a man with quite a Johnsonian personality. An intimate friend of Akenside, and endowed with a "wit and penetrating judgment that had no delicacy in their blow," he once, in an excited "dispute upon the subject of a bilious colic," roused the poet's ire to such an extent that he "flamed into invective" and "ordered his chariot."

* Caleb Hardinge was second son of the Rev. Gideon Hardinge: Nicholas, who married Jane Pratt, sister of the great Lord Camden, was the eldest (Burke's *Peerage*, under Hardinge, Bart.). "Caleb Harding, M.D., of King's Newton," married Anne, third dau. of John Thornhill, of Thornhill, co. Derby (Burke's *Landed Gentry*, under "Thornhill of Thornhill"). Dr. Caleb Harding, of the Tower, Mansfield, Notts, died Nov. 1775; while Mrs. Hardinge, relict of Dr. Caleb Hardinge, of the Tower, died in 1779 ("Musgrave's Obituary," *Harleian Society*). The will of Caleb Hardinge, of Mansfield, Notts, Dr. of Physic, was dated 14 May 1771; and admon. was granted 14 Aug. 1776, in P.C.C. (360 Bellas), to George Hardinge, Esq., his nephew and next of kin, the exors. having renounced execution of the will, and his widow Ann, the universal legatee named therein, having renounced admon. The exors. were his wife, Ann, his brother-in-law Thomas Thornhill, of St. Paul's Churchyard, London, and his friend David Hartley, of Golden Square, London; while the wits. were W. Chambers, Margaret Thornhill, and Catherine Heathcote.

In Nichols's *Literary Illustrations*, III., 4, Caleb Hardinge is described as "of Jesus College, Cambridge; B.A. 1720; M.A. 1724; M.D. (Regis Comitii) 1728; F.R.S. 1743; and many years Physician Extraordinary to King George II and Physician to the Tower. He died at Mansfield in January 1776 [?]. He was a man of singular habits and whims, but of infinite humour and wit. He was, like his brother, a most admirable scholar; and, if he had been uniformly attentive to the duties of his profession, would have acquired the first ranks in it. In medical sagacity and learning he had few if any superiors. His conversation was coveted by the most accomplished wits and scholars of his age. He was a man of perfect honour, and a more benevolent one never breathed. His passion for coursing was one of his most prominent characteristics; but, like all the rest, he made it the source of infinite amusement for his friends. . . . The Doctor's Widow, a lady of considerable talents, died in 1779." At vol. IV., p. 534, it is stated that he was elected F.R.S. 15 Mch. 1753. His friend Jacob Brvant described him as "an extraordinary man" (Nichols's *Literary Anecdotes*, VIII., 536; see also Nichols's *Leicestershire*, III., *784).

Joseph Cradock, in his *Literary Memoirs*, I., 193-4, and IV., 270-4, gives some account of Caleb Hardinge and the liberties he allowed himself in society. It appears that he was well known to Garrick, and to Erasmus Darwin, which brings him in the direction of Lichfield and Johnson. Garrick described him as "a professed wit, a man of very high connexions, licensed to say whatever he pleases in all companies" (*ibid.*, I., 194). From Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes*, IV., 271, we learn that—in a poet's words—"Caleb to publish was not very forward," and "got a subscription, but never published. What the nature of the work was, he intended publishing, is not now known." Cradock (*Memoirs*, IV., 273) tells us that he "advertised Vida's Poems, but never published them."

But the reconciliation next morning, which Dr. Hardinge effected, was worthy of Johnson himself.*

Caleb Hardinge was probably Johnson's senior by some years. If he really went to Lichfield School, it would be explained by the fact that his father died in 1712, when he may have come under the care of his uncle, Robert Hardinge, who lived at the old family seat of King's Newton, in Derbyshire.†

Hawkins tells us that

there dwelt at Lichfield a gentleman of the name of Butt, the father of the reverend Mr. Butt, now a King's Chaplain, to whose house on holidays and in school vacations he was ever welcome. The children in the family, perhaps offended with the rudeness of his behaviour, would frequently call him the great boy, which the father once overhearing, said, "You call him the great boy, but take my word for it, he will one day prove a great man."‡

Hawkins is not quite accurate here, for the Rev. George Butt—father of Mrs. Sherwood, of *The Fairchild Family* fame; and uncle of Henry Salt, the traveller—was a son of Carey Butt, a surgeon and apothecary in Lichfield, who was baptized at St. Mary's only some six months before Johnson. So Carey Butt must have been one of the offending boys, and to his father, William Butt, must be allowed the credit of discovering Johnson's essential greatness. William Butt had several sons much of an age with Johnson: some of them, at least, are sure to have attended Lichfield School. It is of interest that in 1737 Carey Butt, whom Johnson remembered as "a pious man,"§ married Elizabeth, daughter of John Martin, an apothecary in Lichfield, and niece of Michael Johnson's apprentice, Simon Martin.||

Barring Johnson, the most illustrious of all Hunter's pupils was of course David Garrick. But he was seven years and five months younger than Johnson, and his biographers state that he did not enter Lichfield School till after his future companion had left.¶ Possibly, however, Peter Garrick, the Lichfield wine merchant, elder

* See his nephew George Hardinge's account of him, Nichols's *Literary Anecdotes*, VIII., 523-4.

† See *ante*, p. 43; and Burke's *Peerage*, under Hardinge, Bart.

‡ Hawkins's *Life of Johnson*, 1787, pp. 6-7.

§ See *post*, p. 175.

|| See *ante*, p. 13 and *post*, IV., Appendix G.

¶ *Memoirs of David Garrick*, by Thomas Davies, 1784, vol. I., p. 3; Percy Fitzgerald's *Life of Garrick*, new ed. 1899, p. 5.

brother of David, was actually at school with Johnson, than whom he was less than a year younger.*

William Bailye, the printer, father of Hugh Bailye, Canon of Lichfield, is said to have been claimed by Johnson, about 1780, as having been "a classman of mine at Dr. Hunter's."† This William Bailye's father, Richard, was probably the "Mr. Richard Bayley" who was, like Johnson, a godson of Richard Wakefield‡; while his grandfather, William "Bailey," was Michael Johnson's neighbour and his rival as a bookseller.§

Boswell tells us that the unfortunate Joseph Simpson, whose great talents were sacrificed to a career of dissipation, was "a school-fellow of Dr. Johnson's."|| Joseph was the eldest son of Stephen Simpson, of Lichfield, who married Jane Adey, sister of Joseph Adey the Town Clerk;¶ but, as he was not born till early in 1721,** this cannot be so, except in the sense of their both having attended the same school. And Johnson's well-known letter to him reads as one addressed to a much younger man.†† But Charles Howard, the father-in-law of Erasmus Darwin, and a man but two years older than Johnson, we may be pretty sure was at school with him.‡‡ Hawkins, speaking of Johnson's period at Oxford, mentions "a friend who had been educated at the same school with him, then at Christ Church, and intended for the bar"§§: this reference is probably to Taylor,||| who, however, was intended to follow his father as an attorney, and not for the bar.¶¶

These records are sufficient to show that not only did Hunter educate a remarkable number of distinguished men, but also that he attracted to Lichfield a large proportion of the sons of county gentlemen of Staffordshire and neighbouring areas. Indeed Johnson seems to have enjoyed the society of schoolfellows quite the equal

* "Peter, son of Mr. Garrick," bapt. 29 June 1710 at Lichfield Cathedral.

† *Johnsonian Gleanings*, ante, II., 78.

‡ See ante, p. 56.

§ See ante, p. 19, and post, IV., Appendix K.

|| Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, III., 28.

¶ See ante, p. 69.

** See post, IV., Appendix J.

†† Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 346-7; and see *Autobiography of Mrs. Piozzi*, ed. A. Hayward, 2nd ed. 1861, II., 84.

‡‡ See post, p. 174, and IV., Appendix G; also Croker's *Boswell*, new ed. 1890, p. 125.

§§ Hawkins's *Life of Johnson*, 1787, p. 14.

||| See ante, p. 124.

¶¶ *Life of Dr. John Taylor of Ashburne*, by Thomas Taylor, M.A., F.S.A., p. 15.

in birth and standing to the youths who now frequent the best public schools.* Hunter's record, judged practically by his "output," it would be hard to equal, even among those great headmasters to whom his little country grammar school would have seemed a place of very small account.

* The school evidently enjoyed a very good status in Shaw's time (see *ante*, p. 110). In the Lichfield census of 1695 (see *ante*, p. 18), under "St. Johns Street w^{thin} the Barres in St. Marys parish," his household is thus enumerated:—"Rob^t Shaw, Schoolmaster, 45, gent.; Ann his wife, 36; Rob^t, 10, Peter, 2, their sons; Ann, 7, Joan, 3, their Daught^{rs}; Eliz. Heath, 30, Alice Smith, 20, Serv^{ts}; Tho: Jones, Esq^r, 14, Arthur Jones, gent., 13, boarders; Walter Bagott, 17, Cha: Bagott, 14, Wm. Bagott, 10, sons of Sr Walter Bagott, Board^{rs}; Fra: Chettwind, Gent, 16, Wm. Cavendish, Gent., 13, John Whitwick, Gent, 9, Tho. Harman, Gent., 14, Theoph. Harrison, 10, John Johnson, 10, Wm. Potts, minor, 50^{li} *per* Ann., 9, board^{rs}." With Bagots, Chetwynds, Cavendishes, and Wightwicks, the school could certainly hold up its head socially.

It would be of interest to know whether the Theophilus Harrison of Lichfield School was he of the same name and age who took his B.A. at Trinity College, Dublin, in 1703, and on 4 July 1705, aged 20, was incorporated at Queen's College, Oxford, proceeding M.A. there on 15 Dec. 1705 (Foster's *Alumni Oxonienses*). The Irish Theophilus Harrison entered the church, in 1707 married Martha Swift, first cousin to Jonathan Swift, and died in 1714, his widow marrying Edward Whiteway in 1716. His daughter, Mary Harrison, married her second cousin, Deane Swift (*Correspondence of Jonathan Swift*, ed. F. Elrington Ball, VI., 217; *An Eighteenth Century Correspondence*, ed. Lilian Dickins and Mary Stanton, 1910, pp. 17, 24).

The Rev. Philip Hacket, born in 1727, thus wrote to Nichols in or about 1799:—"I remember my grandmother telling me, that Mr. Hunter, the head school-master of Lichfield, with whom Joseph [Addison] the Spectator was placed at school, had often times 99 and near 100 boarders living with him for their education; but never raised 100 complete. He was obliged to incorporate several neighbouring houses, and join them to his school-habitation, to accommodate so large a family. Garrick, I think, and Johnson, were part of their time under the tuition of this famous classical master" (Nichols's *Leicestershire*, III., 238). Mr. Hacket's grandmother, who told him this, was Jane, wife of Philip Hacket and daughter of the Rev. George Holder (died 25 Aug. 1701, aged 66), Sacrist of Lichfield Cathedral, a near relative of Addison's; she died May 1747, aged 80. Addison, of course, was at Lichfield School long before Hunter's day, under the Rev. Robert Shaw (see *ante*, p. 110), so we cannot say whether the tale should apply to Hunter or Shaw. But the Lichfield census of 1695 seems to negative the idea that it could have been true of Shaw, for it contains no evidence of any such houses for boarders in his day. Apart from his own house, I can find only one establishment which might suggest that it included pupils being boarded out, and that is in Bird Street:—"Rich^d Stubbs, 56; Marg^t his wife, 48; Cha: Sherbourn, Bachelor, 26 years; Mary Chimmow, 23, John Chimmow, her son, 3; Tho: Offley, 17, Hen. Offley, 16, Walt. Offley, 14, Chas. Offley, 12, Edw^d Offley, 11, Board^{rs}, sons of Tho: Offley, Esq^r decd." Of these boys three went up to Oxford, Walter (afterwards Dean of Chester) in 1699, Charles in 1702, and Edward in 1704 (Foster's *Alumni Oxonienses*). As further evidence of it really referring to Hunter, we have Johnson's own word for it that he was very keen on boarders as a source of profit (see *ante*, pp. 109-10). But we may reasonably doubt if their number ever approached 100.

And Lichfield school had great traditions before Hunter's day. Among its earlier sons were Joseph Addison, the essayist ;* Elias Ashmole, founder of the great Museum at Oxford ;† William Wollaston, the philosopher ;‡ Gregory King, the well-known herald ;§ George Smalridge, Bishop of Bristol ;|| John Colson, Lucasian professor at Cambridge, ¶ and more interesting to us as that friend to whom Gilbert Walmsley recommended "Davy Garrick" and "Mr. Samuel Johnson," when the pair set out adventurously for London in the March of 1737 ;** and John Rowley, "a celebrated mathematician . . . who is said, by Dr. Johnson, to have constructed the first orrery."††

* See *ante*, pp. 128-9, 134.

† Harwood's *Lichfield*, p. 441 ; and *Dict. Nat. Biog.*

‡ *Dict. Nat. Biog.* and Nichols's *Literary Illustrations*, I., 181. The philosopher's father, William Wollaston, died 10 Mch. 1691, soon after he had moved from Great Bloxwich to Lichfield (Nichols's *Literary Illustrations*, I., 208), and at the time of the Lichfield census of 1695 (see *ante*, p. 18) his widow Elizabeth, daur. of . . . Downes (see Burke's *Landed Gentry*, under "Wollaston of Shenton," and Howard and Crisp's *Visitation of England and Wales*, "Notes," vol. X., p. 79), was living with some of her family in Lombard Street :—"Elizab: Woollaston, Gent., 63 ; Sarah her Daught^r, 25 ; Joseph Woollaston, Batchelor, 28 ; Delphy Woollaston, Spinstr., 62 ; Tho: Woollaston, 10 ; Eliz: Padmoore, servt., 30." I presume that "*Delphy*" was aunt to the philosopher, whose grandfather, Thomas Wollaston, married firstly, *Philadelphia* Vincent ; indeed from his own account of his early life we learn that his "grandfather Wollaston, and aunt *Philadelphia*," came to live with them at Great Bloxwich soon after his parents' marriage (Nichols's *Literary Anecdotes*, I., 178).

§ Harwood's *Lichfield*, p. 446 ; and *Dict. Nat. Biog.*

|| *Reades of Blackwood Hvil and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 211 ; and *Dict. Nat. Biog.*

¶ *Dict. Nat. Biog.* He was a son of Francis Colson, Vicar-Choral of Lichfield Cathedral ; and nephew of John Strype, the ecclesiastical historian.

** Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 101-3.

†† Harwood's *Lichfield*, pp. 448, 570. John Rowley does not seem to have been a man of real eminence, and there is no memoir of him in the *Dict. Nat. Biog.* At his death on 14 Jan. 1728 he was described as "Mechanics to the King, and inventor of the orrery" ("Musgrave's Obituary," *Harleian Society*). On 7 Feb. 1728 admn. of his estate was granted in P.C.C. to Catherine his relict, he being called "John Rowley, late of St. Dunstan's in the West, London" ; and admn. of goods unadministered by her was granted on 5 Mch. 1756 to his daughter Elizabeth, wife of James Harman. Harwood (*Lichfield*, p. 448) says that Rowley was "born in this city," but at what date does not appear. At the time of the Lichfield census of 1695 (see *ante*, p. 18), there was a William Rowley, 44, living in Stowe Street, with Sarah his wife, 35, and children Francis, 4, William, 5, Thamar, 1, and Dorothy, 9 ; and in Beacon Street a Francis Rowley, pauper, 38, with Dorothy his wife, 40, and children, John, 3, Elizabeth, 20, and Mary, 16. There was no will of any Rowley of Lichfield proved at Lichfield down to 1700, and the family was probably one of little consequence.

The earliest account of Rowley's real connexion with the orrery known to me

We hear of various friends of Johnson's boyhood, who may or may not have been at school with him. Writing to Mrs. Thrale, from Lichfield, on 7 August 1777, he mentions that at Birmingham he heard of the death of one old friend, and at Lichfield of the death of another ; the one a little older, the other a little younger, than himself.* And when he visited his native place again in 1779, he remarked to her in a letter of 29 May :—"At night I saw my old friend Brodhurst—you know him—the playfellow of my infancy, and gave him a guinea."† Brodhurst, like Harry Jackson,‡ had evidently fallen on evil days.

One of Johnson's earliest friends was a certain individual, some four years his senior, who looked him up at Lichfield in 1771, after they had not seen each other for forty years. Johnson could not remember that he was a schoolfellow, but only that they had played together before he went to school. This person, in spite of having had "a matter of four wives," was still poor, and at the age of sixty-six was encumbered with "two very young children."§ Conceivably this may have been Brodhurst. Dr. Birkbeck Hill suggests that it may have been Harry Jackson, but Boswell specifically mentions that Jackson was a schoolfellow.||

is by J. T. Desaguliers, F.R.S., in his *Course of Experimental Philosophy*, published in London in 1763, where he gives (vol. I., p. 449) a long description of the Planetarium :—"Mr. George Graham (if I am rightly informed) was the first Person in England, who made a Movement to shew the Motion of the Moon round the Earth, and of the Earth and Moon round the Sun, about 25 or 30 Years ago. In this Machine everything, that was shewn, was well and properly executed. . . . This machine being in the hands of an Instrument-maker, to be sent with some of his own instruments to Prince Eugene, he copied it, and made the first for the late Earl of Orrery, and then several others, with Additions of his own. Sir Richard Steele, who knew nothing of Mr. Graham's Machine, in one of his Lucubrations, thinking to do justice to the first encourager, as well as the Inventor, of such a curious Instrument, call'd it an Orrery, and gave to Mr. J. Rowley, the praise due to Mr. Graham." It was in No. 552 of *The Spectator*, dated 3 Dec. 1712, that Steele first mentioned "the best mechanic of my acquaintance, that useful servant to science and knowledge Mr. John Rowley," and quoted his proposals for a pair of new globes. Rowley was "Master of Mechanics to George I" (*The Spectator*, 1855, vol IV., p. 235). Steele alluded to him again in No. 1 of *The Guardian*, dated 12 Mch. 1713, as "Rowley, who is improving the globes of the earth and heavens in Fleet-street"; and in No. 11 of *The Englishman*.

* *Letters of Samuel Johnson*, ed. Birkbeck Hill, II., 17.

† *Ibid.*, II., 92. Walter Brodhurst, watch-maker, had been the occupier of the house in Breadmarket Street, next to the Johnsons, in or before 1767. See *post*, IV., Appendix A.

‡ See *ante*, pp. 129-30.

§ *Letters of Samuel Johnson*, ed. Birkbeck Hill, I., 176.

|| Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, II., 463.

John Wyatt, whose inventions inaugurated the modern cotton industry, is traditionally said to have been a fellow-pupil of Johnson's at Lichfield, as well as a connexion through the Fords.* A native of Weeford, near to Lichfield, it is quite probable that he can be added to the number of distinguished men who sat under Hunter, but as he was born in April, 1700,† and would therefore have been close on seventeen when Johnson entered the Grammar School,‡ their school days can, at the best, barely have overlapped.

* *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 187.

† Rupert Simms's *Bibliotheca Staffordiensis*.

‡ See *ante*, p. 84.

CHAPTER VII

AT PEDMORE, AND STOURBRIDGE GRAMMAR SCHOOL
1725-1726

The Hickmans of Stourbridge—Henry Hickman, the religious controversialist—Johnson's uncle, Dr. Joseph Ford—Dr. Ford marries Mrs. Gregory Hickman—The Actons of Aldenham—Nathaniel Ford, another uncle of Johnson's, marries Miss Jane Hickman—Dr. Ford's career prosperous and honourable—The wills of Dr. Ford and his widow : interesting bequests—Dr. Ford's celebrated son, " Parson " Cornelius Ford—Cornelius Ford's career at Cambridge : his friendships with Lord Chesterfield and Broome the poet—Writes his father's epitaph—Settles at Pedmore, and marries Judith Crowley—Judith's previous love affair—Sir Ambrose Crowley, the great ironmaster—Judith's fortune useful to her husband—Cornelius Ford invites his cousin Samuel Johnson to Pedmore—How the invitation came about—The scholar-cleric's interest in the clever schoolboy—Johnson's tributes to his brilliant cousin—Intellectual influences of the visit—The " Parson " not yet a profligate—Judith's aristocratic kindred—Johnson's connexion with Lord Chesterfield through the Crowleys—The stay at Pedmore extended—Johnson's return to Lichfield—Hunter refuses him readmittance to the Grammar School—Newport School and its headmaster : Johnson refused admission there—Goes to Stourbridge Grammar School, on " Parson " Ford's recommendation—Mr. Wentworth, the headmaster there—The new scholar's progress—Gregory Hickman's house near the school : his brother-in-law a governor—Johnson's sonnet to Dorothy Hickman—The schoolboy received into the best Stourbridge society—Johnson's excellent social connexions in the neighbourhood—The Quaker Lloyds intermarry with the Crowleys—Johnson's youthful admiration for Olivia Lloyd—The Carless family, and its connexions with the Hickmans and the Hectors—Johnson's early encounter with Lord Lyttelton—Few records of Stourbridge School—Possible visits to relatives at Trysull—Final return to Lichfield—School exercises at Stourbridge.

IN order properly to understand the next move in Johnson's life—that associating him with Stourbridge*—it is necessary to become acquainted with the history of the Hickman family and its double connexion with the family of his mother, Sarah Ford.

The Hickmans had been settled at Stourbridge, as clothiers in a substantial way of business, for more than a hundred years before Johnson's birth, since the very beginning of the seventeenth century. In the third generation of the family was the Rev. Henry Hickman, who dined with the immortal Pepys on 21 August 1660 and held forth at some length to the diarist on the failings of the clergy. Fortified with an Oxford as well as a Cambridge degree, Henry Hickman, after being minister of St. Aldate's at Oxford, held the living of Brackley, Northants, for some years, and while there assisted the studies of Nathaniel Crewe, afterwards second Baron Crewe of Stene and Bishop of Durham. After the Restoration he spent a good deal of his time abroad, though for a period he established himself at Belbroughton, near Stourbridge, where he read logic and philosophy with some of his adherents. In 1667 he gained a wife of family, and some fortune, from Somersetshire. While tutor in the family of William Strode, M.P. for Ilchester in the Long Parliament—brother of Sir George Strode, the Royalist author—he won the heart of William's daughter Joanna Strode, and married her. Hickman was latterly Minister of the English Reformed Church at Leyden, where he died and was buried in 1692. One of the fiercest and most prolific controversialists of his day in the cause of nonconformity, ever ready to enter the lists against the doughtiest champions of the Church of England,† he would have made a worthy opponent for his connexion Dr. Johnson, and, could they have met, Boswell would have had some interesting passages-at-arms between them to chronicle in his notebook.

This Henry Hickman's elder brother Richard carried on the family business of clothiers at Stourbridge, but died in 1660 at the early age

* A large proportion of this chapter was utilized in a paper prepared by me on "Dr. Johnson and Stourbridge," read to the Johnson Society on the occasion of their visit to Stourbridge, on 23 June 1920, and afterwards printed in the *brochure* recording the meeting.

† There is an account of Henry Hickman in the *Dict. Nat. Biog.*; but a much fuller one in my *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 109-10. Further interesting light is thrown on his career by the evidences in Appendix C, *post* IV.

of thirty-six. Richard's elder son, Gregory Hickman, nephew of the controversialist, was also a clothier; and he, too, died in early middle life, at the age of thirty-eight, leaving a widow Jane,* who must be regarded as the original cause of Johnson's connexion with Stourbridge. Except for the fact that her capacity for love was not exhausted by her ten years' union with Gregory Hickman, this chapter would never have been written.

We have already heard that Mrs. Michael Johnson had an eldest brother, Joseph Ford, born in 1662, who established himself at Stourbridge as a physician.† Where he was educated we do not know, or where he obtained the degree of M.D. with which he was credited.‡ But from Gregory Hickman's will, made in July 1689, we learn that Joseph Ford, gentleman, had until lately been in possession of a dwelling-house in Stourbridge, which Gregory had acquired from him. And Joseph Ford was one of the witnesses to the will:§ no doubt he was Gregory's medical attendant.

Mrs. Gregory Hickman, left a widow with four young children,|| was not to be allowed to spend very long fruitlessly mourning the excellent clothier. Indeed, the clever young doctor—he was only twenty-eight and probably a little her junior¶—seems almost at once to have laid siege to her affections and to have married her within not more than eight months of her first husband's death.** This suggests a haste almost indecent, and a young professional man who married thus hurriedly the widow of a prosperous patient would, as a rule,

* *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, Tabular Pedigree XXVII.

† See *ante*, p. 38.

‡ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 146. Sir Norman Moore tells me that no Joseph Ford was a fellow, candidate, or licentiate of the College of Physicians at that period. He was not a graduate of Leyden. The matriculation registers of the University of Edinburgh (which, however, do not include all students) have been searched unsuccessfully 1678–1688 for his name; and he does not appear there as a graduate in medicine.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

|| *Ibid.*, Tabular Pedigree XXVII.

¶ Her second daughter, Jane Hickman, was baptized when Joseph Ford had only just turned twenty. *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

** Gregory Hickman was buried at Oldswinford 29 Mch. 1690 (*ibid.*, Tabular Pedigree XXVII.), and his widow was still unmarried 4 Oct. 1690 (*Johnsonian Gleanings*, *ante*, I., 7). Her first child by Joseph Ford was baptized 2 Sept. 1691 at Oldswinford (*Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, Tabular Pedigree XXIX.).

find himself the object of much local prejudice, especially in a small country town where such incidents become the subject of universal discussion. But in his case gossip, if it affected him prejudicially at first, must very soon have been silenced, for he prospered greatly in his profession, and won much respect.

Dr. Joseph Ford begat a family of his own by Jane, who bore five children to each of her husbands, the eldest dying in infancy in both cases. His own youngest child was born in 1699, less than eight months before the marriage of his eldest stepdaughter, Mary Hickman, whose bridegroom was Clement Acton, an ironmaster at Halesowen, grandson of Sir Edward Acton, the first baronet of Aldenham, direct ancestor of Lord Acton the historian. From Clement and Mary Acton descend the Actons of Gatacre Park, Bridgnorth.*

Two years later Dr. Ford still further lightened his domestic load, when his second stepdaughter, Jane Hickman, also married. Her husband was his own youngest brother, Nathaniel Ford,† a young man of twenty-five, who, as has been already mentioned, had been brought up as a clothier, probably with the Hickmans at Stourbridge.‡ Thus was cemented a second alliance between Johnson and the Hickmans. It was this aunt Jane who spoke so disparagingly of Johnson's physical appearance as an infant.§

In 1706 we find Dr. Ford acting as a trustee for the settlement on the marriage of his sister Sarah Ford to Michael Johnson ;|| and in the

* *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, Tabular Pedigrees XXVII. and XXIX. A detailed pedigree of the Actons of Gatacre Park has recently been printed in the *Visitation of England and Wales*, "Notes," vol. 14, pp. 153-7. The will of Clement Acton, of Old Swinford, co. Worc., gent., is dated 19 Jan. 1726/7. I desire to be buried in the parish church of Tastley [*sc.* Tasley], Salop. To my wife, Mary, £60 and the use of all my household goods, and the interest on £600 part of my stock in partnership at Halesowen Furnace, and Cookley and Whittington Forges. To my brothers in law, Gregory Hickman and Nathaniel Ford, £5 each. I devise to them my dwelling houses at the Lye, par. of Old Swinford, and my leasehold estate at Wenlock Walton, Salop, to sell the same, and my copyhold estate at Guarnal [*sc.* Gornall], co. Staff., they to pay my sons, Thomas, Edward and Clement, £5 each every three months for two years. My money to be divided among my said three sons and my other children, Mary, James and Mabel, at their ages of 21. Exors., my said brothers in law. Signed, Clement Acton. Wits., Mary Dudley (*mark*), Honour Scott, Edw. Milward. Proved 8 Apl. 1727 by Gregory Hickman, power reserved to Nathaniel Ford, when he shall apply for the same [P.C.C., Farrant 81].

† *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, Tabular Pedigree XXIX.

‡ See *ante*, p. 38.

§ See *ante*, p. 59.

|| See *ante*, p. 42.

following year, in October, he gave evidence of his own prosperity by purchasing an estate at Kings Norton, his birthplace, from Lord Somers, for £1,140 odd,* and another one there, in November, for £2,420 odd,† which carried with it three sittings in the chapel of Moseley, and two sittings for a man and maid-servant.‡

We have no detailed record of Dr. Ford's career, but clearly it was a very successful one in its way. Malone describes him as "an eminent physician," while Hawkins says he was "a physician of great eminence."§ The word "eminent," of course, in those days, when one might be "an eminent shoe-maker,"|| had not the significance it now possesses; and there is nothing to show that Dr. Ford made any original contribution to knowledge or was known professionally except in his own neighbourhood. There, however, he must have made a very good reputation.

At the beginning of March 1720/1, Dr. Ford died, after a very painful illness, lasting two months, which is described as having been gout, followed by mortification in both feet.¶ His will, made in the middle of his illness, is a long and interesting one,** and there can scarcely be a doubt that, when Johnson spoke to Boswell in 1773 of having had an uncle who left all his affairs in perfect order and omitted nothing in his will, he was thinking of Dr. Ford, who thus, in his nephew's opinion, evidenced the possession of "great leisure, and great firmness of mind."†† Leisure of a kind he certainly had at the time, but scarcely of a kind to be envied. We wish that we could now see "my owne Picture and my Wife's Picture drawn by Mr. Verelst Junr.;" and "my wife's picture drawn by Mr. Verelst Senr.";‡‡ as well as

* *Johnsonian Gleanings*, ante, I., 7-8.

† *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 146, 206.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

|| Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 310.

¶ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 146, 167. Dr. J. W. Ballantyne, of Edinburgh, who adds keenness as a Johnsonian to his medical accomplishments, tells me that it is almost impossible to say what people in those days died of, from the terms then employed. He thinks that the chief cause of Dr. Ford's death was no doubt gangrene, which may have resulted from a condition of the blood due to the gout, though not certainly.

** *Ibid.*, pp. 191-3.

†† Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, V., 316.

‡‡ "Mr. Lodvick Verelst" died 28 Oct. 1704, aged 35, and was buried at Oldswinford. No doubt he was related to the well-known artists of the name (*Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 146). The will of Lodvick Verelst, late of Hatton

the portraits of his two stepdaughters. And "my silver watch, my silver Tobacco Box, my silver Snuff Box, my plate Sword,* Silver Buckles, and all my Silver Toyes," would be treasures for some ardent Johnsonian.

Dr. Ford appointed his "loveing wife Jane" as sole executrix of his will, and she duly proved it. But she did not live much longer, surviving him little over eighteen months. Her own will, made in September 1722, about a week before her death and evidently before it seemed imminent to her, is principally interesting for the clause in which she directs her son to

pay to my brother-in-law Mr. Michael Johnson and his wife and their Trustees the sum of two hundred pounds which is directed by his late dear Father's will to be paid to me for and in lieu of so much moneys which my said late husband received in trust for my said Brother Johnson and his wife.†

Dr. Ford had instructed his son to pay a sum of £200 to his executrix within six months of his decease, but he had not explained that it was money held in trust for the Johnsons;‡ and his son had evidently failed to pay it within the prescribed period.§ As has already been seen, the money remained in the son's hands until September 1725, when Michael Johnson received half of it for his own use on conveying his house to trustees.|| Mrs. Ford bequeathed to her

Garden, par. of St. Andrew, Holborn, and now of Wollaston, par. of Old Swinford, co. Worc., limner, dated 12 Sept. 1704, was proved 8 Nov. 1704 in P.C.C. [246 Ash], by Elizabeth Verelst, the relict and extrix. He was weak of body, but of sound mind, and asked to be buried at the discretion of his loving wife; to his loving mother, Cecilia Verelst, he left one guinea, and to his dear sister Ariadna Verelst and his brothers, Peter, John and Michael Verelst, each the same. The witnesses were Mary Wheeler, Susanna Child, and Edwd. Kendall. There can be little doubt that Lodvick was nephew to Simon Verelst [1644-1721?], the best known member of the family—perhaps a son of Harmen Verelst, who is said to have died about 1700 and been buried at *St. Andrew's, Holborn* (*Dict. Nat. Biog.*). Probably Lodvick was the "Mr. Verelst Junr" and his father the "Mr. Verelst Senr" of the will. It would be interesting to know what brought them into Worcestershire.

* Probably a sword with a plated handle. Sir John Hawkins, speaking of Edmond Barker [1721-80?], remarks—"Physicians in his time were used to be full dressed; and in his garb of a full suit, a brown tye-wig with a knot over one shoulder, and a long yellow-hilted sword, and his hat under his arm, he was a caricature" (*Hawkins's Life of Johnson*, 1787, p. 233).

† *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 193.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

|| See *ante*, p. 49.

daughter, Mrs. Acton, her "black Pattesway* gown and petticoat"; to her daughter, Mrs. Nathaniel Ford, her "silk night gown," no doubt what we should now call her "evening dress"; and to her youngest daughter, Honor, who had married Daniel Scott, her "velvet scarf."†

Mrs. Ford left only one son surviving by her second husband, but a son who is the most interesting figure in the whole circle of Johnson's kinsfolk—Cornelius Ford, the brilliant but dissipated "Parson" Ford, immortalized by Hogarth in his *Midnight Modern Conversation*, where he presides over the punch-bowl.‡ Baptized in January 1693/4, Cornelius Ford does not seem to have been a pupil at Stourbridge Grammar School, or, if so, only for a short time, as he is known to have been educated at the school of Mansfield, in Nottinghamshire, under Mr. Man. Perhaps it was his proficiency at classics there that prompted his grandfather (and Johnson's grandfather) Cornelius Ford, when he made his will in April 1709, to leave him his "Latine Bible."§ In March 1710 he was admitted to St. John's College, Cambridge, as a pensioner, at the age of sixteen, his tutor and surety being Christopher Anstey, father of the author of the *New Bath Guide*.|| He was admitted B.A. in 1713, and afterwards migrated to Peterhouse, where he proceeded M.A. in 1720.¶

A man of wide knowledge and ready wit, Cornelius Ford enjoyed while at Cambridge the friendship of men so diverse as William Broome, the poet, who had entered St. John's the year before him, the Hon. Charles Cornwallis, and the celebrated Philip Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield.** With Broome, as Johnson tells us, he shared a room in College for some time; but to Cornelius Ford, with his ready gift of speech and his worldly address, the budding poet seemed at that time a man covered with "scholastick rust," of narrow scholarship, and quite without the social qualities that come from intercourse with one's fellows.††

* "Paduasoy," or "Padesoy," was a strong, corded silk fabric much worn in the 18th century. See *Cranford*, Chap. V., concerning a bride of 1774, whose chief desideratum for her *trousseau* was "a white Paduasoy."

† *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 193.

‡ *Ibid.*, pp. 166-7. § See *ante*, p. 50. || *Johnsonian Gleanings*, *ante*, I., 25.

¶ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 158-9.

** *Ibid.*, pp. 159, 161.

†† *Johnson's Lives of the English Poets*, ed. Birkbeck Hill, III., 75.

When Dr. Joseph Ford, in the miseries of his last illness, made his will, on 10 February 1720/1,* he laid down no special conditions suggesting that he regarded his son Cornelius as unfitted to inherit his estate, except when he said what was to be done if that son "refuse or neglect to pay or cause to be paid" thereout certain sums to relatives. In addition to real estate at Kings Norton,† Cornelius was to inherit all his father's "Study of Books," and all his plate.‡

Cornelius at least paid a noble tribute to his father's character in the epitaph he wrote on him. Preserved for us by his fellow-collegian and contemporary at Cambridge, Francis Peck,§ in his *Desiderata Curiosa*, this epitaph—of course in Latin—is the only composition of any kind by "Parson" Ford that is known to exist. In it are specially emphasized the good relations that existed between the physician and his patients, rich as well as poor; his love for his family and devotion to his friends; his social qualities, of heart and head; his charity in judging others; his grace of person; and the steadfast courage with which he faced his death.||

There is no particular evidence to indicate where Cornelius was living at this time, or whether he had left Cambridge. A letter written in May 1722, from St. John's, by Vere Foster, one of the Fellows, quotes a humorous poem by Edward Prior, of Trinity, which alludes ironically to

That unaffected modesty of mind,
Which nor in Green nor Ford improv'd we find.

The author adds a note saying that "the characters of Green and

* See *ante*, p. 142.

† Among the Kings Norton manorial documents is a Suit Roll for the Manor, 1721, in which occurs:—"Head Yield, ["Joseph" struck out] Cornelius Ford, Fine. Lea Yield, Cornelius Ford, Fine" (*inf.* Mr. W. B. Bickley).

‡ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 191.

§ Francis Peck entered St. John's College in 1709, four months before Cornelius Ford (*Admissions to St. John's College, Cambridge*, Part II., ed. J. E. B. Mayor, pp. lxxxiv., 196). Peck received the epitaph from the Rev. Thomas Mason, Rector of Colsterworth, Lincs, possibly the Thomas Mason who entered St. John's in 1698 (*ibid.*, Part II., p. 146). Colsterworth is only five miles from Stroxtun, where Cornelius Ford's uncle Samuel was churchwarden in 1717 (see *ante*, pp. 44-5). Francis Peck's widow Anne was buried at Stroxtun in 1781 (*Admissions to St. John's College, Cambridge*, Part II., p. lxxxiv.).

|| *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 167.

Ford, you are well enough acquainted with." Richard Green took his LL.B. from Peterhouse, where Cornelius Ford had migrated, in 1722; and it seems probable that both were then in residence at Cambridge.* But when Mrs. Ford died, in September 1722, she earnestly requested her "dear son Cornelius Ford . . . to continue as a friend and father to my family,"† which rather suggests that he was then living at home, the head of his mother's household. She also requested that he should, "with all convenient speed," pay all the sums as directed in his father's will,‡ which may suggest that his finances were already beginning to drag.

Among the properties devised by Dr. Ford to his son Cornelius was a dwelling house and farm at Pedmore, then in the holding of John "Willis"§; and Mrs. Ford in her will alludes to the same property as held by her "under the feoffees of the late Mr. Foley's hospital there."|| In all probability he went to live there after her death: certainly he settled for a time at Pedmore, which is only about a mile and a half south of Stourbridge. On the Easter Tuesday of 1723 he signed his name in the Churchwardens' Book of Oldswinford, to acknowledge receipt of the sum of £7 5s. od. which had been owing to his late father, Dr. Joseph Ford, on account of

* *Johnsonian Gleanings*, ante, I., 24-5.

† *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 193.

‡ *Ibid.*, loc. cit.

§ John Willetts was buried at Pedmore in 1727 (*Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 148). The will of John Willetts, of Foxcote, par. of Pedmore, co. Worc., yeoman. Being old, etc., "do make this my last will this 12 July xi George 1725." After death of wife, Mary Willetts, I give to Anne, wife of Elisha Dixon, and Pheby, wife of Wm. Pargeter, and their heirs, two messuages, lands and premises at the Lye, par. of Old Swinford, purchased from Edward Perks, and now in tenure of Thos. Robins and Adam Reade, to be equally divided between my two daurs. To daur. Mary Willetts, after death of said wife, £80. All rest of estate after payment of debts, etc., to my wife Mary Willetts, whom I make extrix. Overseers, John Hill, of Oldnald, and Wm. Perks, of the Copy. Signed, John Willetts. Wits., Dorothy Philpott, John Ruddle, and Tho. Philpott. Proved at Worcester, 2 Feb. 1727, by Mary Willetts, widow, the relic and extrix. Foxcote is nearly two miles from the village of Pedmore, in the direction of Cradley; but whether the Ford property was at Foxcote is not clear.

|| *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 193. On 28 Aug. 1712 a lease of 74 acres of land at Pedmore was granted by the feoffees of Old Swinford Free School [founded by Thomas Foley in 1671] to Joseph Ford, at a rental of £27 8s., with power to cut timber (*Free Schools of Worcestershire*, by George Griffith, 1852, p. 335).

moneys disbursed by him as Supervisor of Highways for the parish.*

Writing to Broome at the very end of 1723, Pope mentions having written to Sir Thomas Hanmer, and declares his intention to "do the same to Ford and to all the world"; his object being to vindicate Broome from some charges the nature of which is not revealed. Very probably Pope knew Ford personally, yet in all his correspondence there is no other allusion to the "Parson."†

On 3 June 1724 Cornelius Ford, of Pedmore, gentleman, now aged thirty, was licensed at Worcester to marry Judith Crowley, of Halesowen, maiden; and the wedding took place the very same day at Rushock,‡ which was on the way back from Worcester to Pedmore. The allegation for the licence was made by Cornelius Ford himself and his cousin Cornelius Harrison,§ afterwards incumbent of Darlington,|| but then described as of St. Philip's, Birmingham. As Cornelius Harrison had gone up to Cambridge in 1718, he may have seen something of his brilliant cousin at the University.

It was no pretty young bride with whom Cornelius Ford had linked his fortunes. For Judith was a mature spinster of forty-three, one of the large family of the late Ambrose Crowley,¶ a prosperous ironmonger—or, as we should now say, ironmaster—of Stourbridge.

* Extract from churchwardens' minutes:—"Old Swinford. March 27^o, 1722. Att a General vestry meeting of this parish of Old Swinford, it is agreed that the summe of seven pounds and five shillings which hath been laid out and disbursed by Jos. Ford, Gent., deceased late supervisor of the Highways for this Parish since the last levy made and granted to him as appears by accounts approved and allowd at a general meeting of the parish^{rs} upon 15^o Jan^{ry} last shall and may be paid to Jane Ford Widd., Relict & Exec^r of the said Joseph by the next overseers of the Poor and that the same shall be allowed to them in their next accounts." This meeting was on Easter Tuesday, and not until the following Easter Tuesday after Mrs. Ford's death was the money paid, as the following further extract shows:—"April 16th 1723. Received of the Overseers of the Parish of Old Swinford the summ of seven pounds and five shillings in full of all accounts due to me as executor of my mother upon a parish order for a debt due to my father as Supervisor of the Highways of this Parish. I say Rec^d by me, CORN. FORD" (*inf.* Mr. Alfred E. Chance, parish clerk of Oldswinford).

† *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 164.

‡ *Johnsonian Gleanings*, ante, II., 110.

§ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 159.

|| See ante, p. 106.

¶ A large, well painted head and shoulders portrait of Ambrose Crowley is in the possession of Mr. T. O. Lloyd, of The Priory, Warwick, descended from Sampson Lloyd and Mary Crowley (see *post*, p. 159).

He had probably known her all his life, and Ambrose Crowley, when he made his will in 1713, nominated as two of his executors this daughter Judith and Cornelius's father, Dr. Joseph Ford.* And she would seem to have had a previous love affair. For John Pemberton, of Bennetts Hill, Birmingham, a well-known Quaker ironmaster, who in 1693 had married Elizabeth, sister of Sampson Lloyd,† and been left a widower by her in 1711, almost immediately afterwards began to pay court to his "cousin," Miss Crowley of Stourbridge.‡ Presumably this was Judith, as Ambrose Crowley's other daughters had been married a good many years at that time.§ John Pemberton's affections, however, soon wandered elsewhere, and he had to obtain the usual "discharge" from her that the Friends required.

The Crowley family had already begun its remarkable rise in the social scale, principally through the agency of Judith's half-brother, Sir Ambrose Crowley, an historic figure in the development of the north-country iron industry, whose rapid accumulation of wealth had made him a butt for the satire of Steele and Addison.|| Old Ambrose Crowley, of Stourbridge, had been a member of the Society of Friends,¶ and the fact of Judith herself being a Quaker made it necessary for her to be baptized into the Church, at Rushock, immediately before the wedding ceremony.**

* *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 159, 169.

† See *post*, p. 159.

‡ Hill and Dent's *Memorials of the Old Square* [Birmingham], p. 22.

§ See his will, *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 169.

|| Numerous particulars of Sir Ambrose Crowley and his family will be found in my *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 159, 168-70, and *Johnsonian Gleanings*, ante, I., 9-10. In the *Victoria County History of Durham*, vol. II., 1907, pp. 281-7, Miss Maud Sellers, in her account of the iron and steel industry of the county, gives a long and most interesting account of Sir Ambrose Crowley's share in the development of the Durham iron trade, showing that he had "a genius for organisation," and ran his works near Gateshead under a code of laws and orders which anticipates in an extraordinary manner the modern manufacturer's interest in the welfare of his workmen, with a superannuation fund, a certain amount of self-government, and a chaplain and surgeon provided by the employers. Sir Ambrose's headquarters were in Thames Street, London; but he started a branch at Sunderland in 1682, which he moved to near Gateshead in 1690. Miss Sellers also says that when William Penn came to England to consult the best authorities in regard to developing Pennsylvania, it was to Crowley he applied for directions as to how to work the iron.

¶ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 159, 169.

** *Johnsonian Gleanings*, ante, II., 110.

On the face of it the marriage would appear to have been a mercenary one, though with the parallel instance of his celebrated cousin Dr. Johnson before us we must be careful before condemning him as a mere fortune hunter. Yet the circumstances were decidedly suspicious. Judith Crowley had "a Fortune in money of about £1,200, besides Linnen, plate and Jewels, etc., value £200." And according to the same source which supplies us with these particulars, he had been mortgaging his properties and becoming more involved financially ever since his parents' death, and had failed to pay the sums named in his father's will, in spite of his mother's later testamentary appeal.* And, further, we know that after gaining possession of Judith's person and cash he was able to put down £250, and two months later another £65, to pay off one of his mortgages.† However, he did not entirely neglect parochial affairs, for at the end of March 1725 we find him attending a vestry meeting at Pedmore, and putting his signature to one of the minutes.‡

Up to this time there is no evidence of Cornelius Ford having met his clever young cousin, Samuel Johnson. But "in the autumn of the year 1725"—as Hawkins tells us§—when Samuel had just attained the age of sixteen, he was invited by Cornelius to come to stay with him at Pedmore. The evidence of a musty old deed gives us the clue to how this happened, and incidentally confirms Hawkins's date. By an instrument of 16 Sept. 1725, Michael Johnson conveyed his house in the Market Square to trustees. Now the principal other party to this deed was "the Reverend Cornelius Ford, of the parish of Pedmore in the county of Worcester, clerk";|| and there can scarcely be a doubt that it was when Michael Johnson and Cornelius Ford met to sign and complete this indenture that the question of Samuel's visit to Pedmore was first broached. As a scholar, and an educated man of the world, Cornelius no doubt was attracted by his cousin's intellectual promise, and desired to test the boy's capacities for himself. Mr. and Mrs. Johnson can

* *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 161-2.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 162, 275.

‡ *Johnsonian Gleanings*, ante, I., 8-9.

§ *Hawkins's Life of Johnson*, 1787, p. 8.

|| See ante, p. 49; and post, IV., Appendix A.

have raised no serious objection, for to Pedmore Samuel duly went.*

The visit was a decided success, and if there was any diffidence on either side it soon wore away. Cornelius Ford, who, though now in holy orders, had had the advantage of a layman's freer intellectual existence for some dozen years after taking his degree, was evidently a man of much good sense and much good feeling, however far he may have fallen from grace in matters of finance, and in his pursuit of pleasure. Boswell described him as "a man in whom both talents and good dispositions were disgraced by licentiousness, but who was a very able judge of what was right";† and Johnson himself said that his "abilities, instead of furnishing convivial merriment to the voluptuous and dissolute, might have enabled him to excel among the virtuous and the wise."‡ When he spoke of his cousin to Mrs. Thrale, "it was always with tenderness, praising his acquaintance with life and manners."§ And Hawkins said that Johnson described him in conversation as "a man of great wit and stupendous parts."||

Ford was evidently very favourably impressed with his young visitor, and

discovering that the boy was possessed of uncommon parts, was unwilling to let him return, and to make up for the loss he might sustain by his absence from school, became his instructor in the classics, and further assisted him in his studies.¶

It was to Johnson's advantage that his cousin, though probably much the best scholar he had met up to that time, was no mere pedant, but a man of wide knowledge and sympathies, with a mind whose freshness and resilience had not been destroyed by schoolmastering. He particularly impressed upon Johnson the advantages of all-round culture; for while the mere specialist was seldom wanted, the man of

* See my *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 147-8, 164-5, where the whole evidence concerning this phase of his career is fully discussed; also *Johnsonian Gleanings*, ante, I., 8-9. But at these references I had not the evidence of Cornelius Ford having taken orders *before* Johnson visited him at Pedmore. The Diocesan Registrar at Worcester can find no record of Cornelius Ford's ordination in 1724 or 1725.

† Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 49.

‡ *Johnson's Lives of the English Poets*, ed. Birkbeck Hill, II., 261.

§ Piozzi's *Anecdotes of the late Samuel Johnson*, 2nd ed. 1786, p. 14.

|| Hawkins's *Life of Johnson*, 1787, p. 2.

¶ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

general knowledge was an ever welcome figure.* No one can dispute that this piece of advice fell on good ground ; on better, perhaps, than that which told him he would make his way in the world more easily, and be more generously received as a writer, proportionately as he did not seek to gain the mastery over all those with whom he conversed.†

It is very much to be questioned whether, at this time, Cornelius Ford was "eminent for vice,"‡ or even "of very profligate manners."§ Had he been publicly outraging the proprieties, his uncle and aunt at Lichfield would surely have heard something about it, and would scarcely have sanctioned their son staying under his roof. In all probability his wife, a middle-aged and most respectable woman, of Quaker upbringing, was living with him at Pedmore at this time, and she would scarcely encourage bacchanalian orgies in her house. As a matter of fact, Johnson probably never was "a witness to the profligacy of his uncle [*sc.* cousin] Ford," as Hawkins imagined he had been.|| That profligacy was more identified with the later years of his life, when, so far as is known, Johnson never saw him.¶

It may be mentioned that, at the time when Johnson stayed at Pedmore, Mrs. Ford had already acquired some aristocratic connexions. Her niece, Lettice Crowley, had, some years before, married Sir John Hynde Cotton, the well-known Jacobite ;** while Lettice's sister

* Piozzi's *Anecdotes of the late Samuel Johnson*, 2nd ed. 1786, p. 14.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15. I have reversed Mrs. Piozzi's interpretation of this speech, on grounds explained in my *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 160.

‡ Piozzi's *Anecdotes of the late Samuel Johnson*, 2nd ed., 1786, p. 14.

§ Hawkins's *Life of Johnson*, 1787, p. 2.

|| *Ibid.*, p. 19.

¶ Those who wish to follow the later career of Cornelius Ford can do so in my *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 159-68, 275-6. He was presented in January 1726/7, by his old college friend, Philip, Earl of Chesterfield, to the Rectory of South Luffenham, in Rutland, and held it until his death in London on 22 Aug. 1731, though if he resided there it can only have been for short periods. According to Colley Cibber, he acted as one of Lord Chesterfield's chaplains. He seems to have kept up some residential connexion with Pedmore almost to the last : possibly his wife remained there. The advowson of the living of South Luffenham was purchased by him for £840, part of his wife's fortune. Latterly he borrowed money right and left, and early in the year of his death he was a prisoner for debt in the Fleet, though he managed to secure his release. An obituary notice in *The Historical Register* described him as "well known to the world for his great wit and abilities," showing that his reputation was really contemporary with him and not a mere after reflection of his cousin's eminence.

** *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 169 ; and *Johnsonian Gleanings*, ante, I., 10.

Elizabeth, the youngest daughter of Sir Ambrose, was the six-months bride of John, 10th Lord St. John of Bletsoe.* Sir Ambrose had but one surviving son, John Crowley, who in 1715 married Theodosia, daughter of Dr. Joseph Gascoyne, Rector of Enfield.† It is a very curious fact that John Crowley's daughter Mary married Sir William Stanhope, younger brother of Cornelius Ford's patron, the Earl of Chesterfield, whom we shall always remember as the butt of Johnson's scorn. Lord Chesterfield's brother thus became great-nephew by marriage to Johnson's cousin, "Parson" Ford. It seems very probable that when Johnson introduced himself to Lord Chesterfield, he would mention that he was a cousin of that peer's old college friend and chaplain, and Lord Chesterfield, knowing that the "Parson" had married Judith Crowley, and that his own brother had married Mary Crowley, would realize that there was some family connexion, though of a very remote kind, between himself and the ill-dressed scholar who confronted him. It is, however, very unlikely that Johnson would know of Lord Chesterfield's brother having married a Crowley; and Lord Chesterfield, intent on social appearances, would hardly enlighten him.‡

* *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 169-70. There is an amusing reference to her in a letter of "Gilly" Williams to George Selwyn in 1765:—"Coventry [*i.e.*, George William, 6th Earl of Coventry, who in 1764 married Lady St. John's daughter Barbara] mends slowly. His old mother-in-law is come to town, and would much divert you. She is as good-natured, mellow an old hostess, as ever kept any Black or White Lion in any town in Europe" (*George Selwyn and His Contemporaries*, by John Heneage Jesse, 1843, vol. I., p. 409). For references to the marriage of Lord Coventry to "Bab St. John," see *ibid.*, I., 289, 299; and *Letters of First Earl of Malmesbury*, 1870, I., 113. Sir Ambrose Crowley was married 2 Mch. 1681/2, to Mary Owen, at St. Bartholomew the Less, London; she was of the ancient family of Owen of Condovery, in Shropshire (*Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 169), and her mother was sister to Sir John Knight, of Bristol and Mitcham. So that Lady St. John, if homely as suggested, was not really of such plebeian origin.

† *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 169. Marriage, at Enfield, 15 Dec. 1715:—"John Crowley, esq., of Greenwich, & Theodosia Gascoyne" (*Middlesex Registers*, vol. V.). There is a monument at Barking to John Crowley, who died 2 Jan. 1727-8, aged 39; and to Theodosia his daughter, wife of Charles Boone, who died 9 Jan. 1765, aged 40 (*Topographer and Genealogist*, ed. J. G. Nichols, vol. I., 1846, p. 541; *Historical Register Chronicle*, 1728, p. 5).

‡ The connexion between Johnson and Lord Chesterfield is discussed by me at some length in a letter to Mr. Clement Shorter, printed in *The Sphere* for 30 Oct. 1915. Lady Stanhope's youngest sister, Elizabeth Crowley, was married, 28 June 1756, to John, 2nd Earl of Ashburnham, and thus became great-grandmother to Algernon Charles Swinburne. But Lady Stanhope had been dead eleven years then: she was buried

It had been intended that young Johnson's stay at Pedmore should extend only to a few days. But the days lengthened into weeks, and the weeks into months, and it was not until the Whitsuntide of 1726 that he returned to Lichfield.* Evidently, in this case, Cornelius Ford found it as congenial to instruct as Johnson found it to learn. Forty-five years later, in 1771, writing to Mrs. Thrale, he dilated on the pleasure it would have given him to revisit Hagley—only about a mile from Pedmore—where he would "have had the opportunity of recollecting past times, and wandering *per montes notos et flumina nota*, of recalling the images of sixteen, and reviewing my conversations with poor Ford."† This holiday spent with his brilliant cousin must be reckoned among the principal formative influences of his early years.

On Johnson's return to Lichfield, Mr. Hunter, not unnaturally, refused to take his former pupil back into the school.‡ Discipline is the boast of every headmaster, and Hunter, even under the softening influence of a second love,§ would be the last man to relax the rules

7 Mch. 1745 at Shelford. She was Sir William's second wife: his first was buried 12 Oct. 1740 at Shelford (Glover's *Derbyshire*, II., 164). Lord Chesterfield, however, was kept in mind of his Crowley connexions, for "long" Sir Thomas Robinson wrote to him on 20 Mch. 1756:—"Lord Denbigh has got the *entré* to the elder Crowley, and with Lord Ashburnham, and the younger sister, play at 12d. cribbage and make love every night.—Luck attends some men: here is cut and home again" (*European Mag.*, 1805, pt. I., p. 422). No luck attended Lord Denbigh in his lovemaking on this occasion; he married Mary Cotton a year later. At the sale of the Ashburnham silver, on 24 Mch. 1914, "the most extensive 'lot' consisted of a George I silver-gilt plain toilet service, engraved with the arms of Crowley impaling Gascoigne, by Benjamin Pyne, 1719"; it weighed 626 oz. and fetched £6,100 (*The Times*, 25 Mch. 1914). Mr. John Walker Ford, writing to me in January 1913, mentioned that he had recently been staying with his son-in-law at Barking Hall, Suffolk, the property of the Earl of Ashburnham; that John Crowley purchased the estate and built the Hall, which, with the rest of the Crowley property, devolved upon Lady Ashburnham as the sole survivor of the family. There were portraits there of John Crowley and his son—"imposing looking men in snuff-brown coats and big wigs."

* Hawkins's *Life of Johnson*, 1787, p. 8.

† *Letters of Samuel Johnson*, ed. Birkbeck Hill, I., 177.

‡ Murphy's *Essay on the Life and Genius of Dr. Johnson*, 1792, p. 10.

§ On 10 June 1726, at St. Luke's, Chelsea, he married his second wife, Lucy Porter (see *Johnsonian Gleanings*, ante, I., 19; and *post*, p. 177), who had probably been keeping house for her elder brother, Joseph Porter, the rich London merchant (concerning whom see *The Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 232-3). The Rev. F. A. Homer has kindly sent me the following abstract of a deed in his possession:—

Indenture made 1 Sept. 1727 between (1) Joseph Porter, of London, gent., eldest son and heir of Henry Porter, late of Birmingham, co. Warwick, mercer, decd., and

in favour of a boy who had absented himself for months "without proper cause." So that the Johnsons were placed in a difficult position, and were hard put to know how to complete their son's education. Under the circumstances, as Bishop Percy told Boswell, his father "applied to have him admitted as a scholar and assistant to the Reverend Samuel Lea, M.A., headmaster of Newport School, in Shropshire (a very diligent, good teacher, at that time in high reputation),"* who later taught Percy himself. Possibly Michael Johnson's choice of Newport School was influenced by the Skrymschers, who lived at High Offley, not half a dozen miles away. Gerard Skrymscher's widow Catherine, whom we presume to have been Michael's sister, had died in July 1725, but her son Charles, "very nearly related" to Dr. Johnson, and himself quite likely an old Newport scholar, was still living at High Offley with his wife.†

But here again they met with a rebuff; Mr. Lea would not accept young Johnson,‡ or at any rate not on the terms suggested. Why, there is no evidence to show; but of course no good school jumps at a boy who has been rejected elsewhere. Mr. Lea, who was then a man of about thirty-seven,§ had only been appointed to Newport the year before: a graduate of Jesus College, Cambridge, he had for some years been curate of Bucknall, near Stoke-on-Trent, and had been in charge of a school there. No doubt he was anxious to raise the prestige of Newport School, and so exercising his power of selecting

Sarah his wife, decd., (2) John Hunter, of the City of Lichfield, clerk, and Lucy his wife, sister of said Joseph Porter, and (3) Thomas Norton, of Warwick, and Anthony Nicholson, of Inner Temple, gent.

By certain marriage articles made 9 June 1726 between (1) John Hunter, (2) Joseph Porter, (3) Lucy Hunter, then Lucy Porter, of London, spinster, and (4) Thomas Norton and Anthony Nicholson, Joseph Porter agreed to make a charge of £600 on his lands as a marriage portion for said Lucy Hunter.

The marriage was solemnised 10 June last past, so Joseph Porter grants, unto Thomas Norton and Anthony Nicholson, houses, etc., in Birmingham, on mortgage for the sum of £630 to be paid before 11 June 1727, to use of said John and Lucy Hunter and their heirs. Signatures of Joseph Porter, John Hunter, Lucy Hunter, Anthony Nicholson. Wits., John Cripps, Keating King, Harriott Husband, Ambrose Humphreys.

* Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 50. Percy's letter, dated 5 Mch. 1787, from which this is quoted, is printed in full in Nichols's *Literary Illustrations*, VII., 305, where Percy continues, "and under whom Mr. Hollis is said in the Memoirs of his Life to have been also educated, as was afterwards your humble servant."

† *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 256.

‡ Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 50.

§ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 247.

the best pupils for that purpose. The school flourished under Lea, particularly as regards the number of boarders, but in 1730 he complained bitterly to Jerome Knapp, the clerk of the Haberdashers' Company, who were patrons of the school, that local persons in authority were industriously circulating "thro' 3 Counties" every manner of malicious falsehood about the headmaster, with the object of discrediting him.* However, he held the post until his death in 1773, eighteen months after burying his *fourth* wife.† He became aware in later life of what he had missed by refusing the bookseller's son; and Johnson was gratified long after to hear that

the old gentleman, who lived to a very advanced age, mentioned it as one of the most memorable events of his life, that "he was *very near* having that great man for his scholar."‡

Johnson's cousin, Cornelius Ford, now came to the rescue, and advised that he be sent to Stourbridge Grammar School, to which his parents consented.§ To Stourbridge, therefore, he went, presumably after the Whitsuntide vacation of 1726,|| when he would be about sixteen and a half years old. The school was then under the headmastership of the Rev. John Wentworth, a middle-aged man who, Hawkins tells us, "affecting to be thought allied to the Strafford family," had changed his name from Winkworth.¶ Such evidence as we possess does not support this charge of snobbery. He matriculated from Corpus Christi College, Oxford, on 6 May 1692, aged 15, as son of Thomas Wentworth, of Salisbury, *pleb.*, and his brothers also bore the name of Wentworth. He took his B.C.L. degree in 1727.** Appointed headmaster of Stourbridge School in 1704, he held his position until 1732, when he "was discharged for being too long absent from school and giving too long a holiday during Whitsuntide. He appealed to the Solicitor-General on the matter, and received his salary until 1734."†† He was buried at Oldswinford

* *Johnsonian Gleanings*, ante, I., 27-9.

† *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 247.

‡ Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 50.

§ *Ibid.*, I., 49.

|| See ante, p. 153.

¶ Hawkins's *Life of Johnson*, 1787, p. 9. The Earls of Strafford were then Wentworths.

** Foster's *Alumni Oxonienses*.

†† Address by Mr. J. E. Boyt, the present Headmaster, to the Johnson Society, on their visiting the school on 23 June 1920.

in February 1740/1, aged 63.* Though Boswell credits him with a son,† he died a bachelor.‡

Johnson, it seems, went to Stourbridge on the same terms that had been unsuccessfully proposed to Mr. Lea at Newport, for Bishop Percy told Boswell that at Stourbridge Michael Johnson "got him to be received as an assistant to the master, and where he was to have his own instruction gratis for teaching the lesser boys."§ Johnson described Mr. Wentworth as "a very able man, but an idle man, and to me very severe." But he did not blame the headmaster much, who saw that he was a big boy and "did not reverence him." Johnson came to the school well equipped with knowledge sufficient to carry him through; and Wentworth saw that whatever more he learned would be attributed to the boy's own labour, or credited to his former schoolmaster, and that he himself could "get no honour" from the transaction. Boswell tells us that "at this school he did not receive so much benefit as was expected"; yet Johnson admitted that Wentworth "taught me a great deal."|| To Bishop Percy he said that at Lichfield he "learnt much in the school, but little from the master," while at Stourbridge he "learnt much from the master, but little in the school."¶ If in the one case he was a mere pupil, and in the other case a kind of pupil teacher, his discrimination between the two schools is only in accordance with common reason.

* *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 247.

† See *post*, p. 162. Boswell's "son" was probably a nephew.

‡ Admon. of the goods of John Wentworth, of the par. of Oldswinford, clerk, intestate, a bachelor, was granted at Worcester, 29 Apl. 1741, to Thomas Wentworth, of par. of St. Thomas in Salisbury, goldsmith, and George Wentworth, of city of Oxford, watchmaker, the natural and lawful brothers and admors. Penalty of bond, £200. Sureties, John Dandridge, of city of Worcester, gent., and John Merifield, of par. of St. Michael in Bedwardine, of co. and dio. of Worcester, organist. This evidence enabled me to identify John Wentworth at Oxford. "Thomas Wentworth, Esq.," was Mayor of Salisbury in 1719 (*Modern Wiltshire*, by Sir Richard Colt Hoare, Bt., 1843, p. 510). John, son of Thomas Wentworth, of Salisbury, gent., matriculated from Magdalen Hall, Oxford, on 11 Oct., 1725, aged 17; he was a chorister of Magdalen College 1729-31, and became B.C.L. 1733 (*Foster's Alumni Oxonienses*). This John was probably the schoolmaster's nephew.

§ Nichols's *Literary Illustrations*, VII., 306. Percy seems to have derived his information from conversations he had heard between Dr. Johnson and Anna Williams. Mr. J. E. Boyt, the present headmaster of Stourbridge Grammar School, does not consider that Johnson was a pupil teacher, but that he may have been a monitor.

|| Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 50.

¶ *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

In all probability Johnson was a boarder in the headmaster's house,* and as such would have plenty of opportunity for acquiring knowledge from that dignitary out of school hours.

At the time of Johnson's schooling there was in Stourbridge a house called Green Close, which was separated from the school by the Old Horseshoe Inn and by an entry which served as an approach to the back of the school. Green Close was the property and residence of Gregory Hickman, half-brother of the brilliant Cornelius Ford, which he had inherited from his father, the elder Gregory.† It was probably due a good deal to the Hickman influence that Johnson was admitted to the school. Under the rules, as revised about 1700, no stranger could be admitted to the school except by the consent of at least one governor, and then only after the educational needs of the children of Oldswinford and Stourbridge had been fully satisfied.‡ Gregory Hickman was not himself a governor at that time, but his brother-in-law, Daniel Scott, a clothier in the town, husband of his youngest sister, Honor Hickman, seems to have been one,§ and his influence no doubt was brought to bear in favour of Johnson.

Gregory Hickman, a figure of some interest if only as the recipient of the first letter of Johnson's that is known to have been preserved, was at this time a man of thirty-eight, and a leading figure in the town. His first wife Dorothy, widow of his first cousin Richard Hickman,

* *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 150.

† *Ibid.*, p. 105, and Tabular Pedigree XXVII.; also *ante*, p. 140.

‡ George Griffith's *Free Schools of Worcestershire*, 1852, p. 394.

§ Mr. Boyt says that the governors while Johnson was at the school were "Thos. Hunt, North Foley, D. Scott, Paul Rogers, J. Bradley, R. Wheeler and J. Jesson." "Mr. Daniel Scott" was buried at Oldswinford, 12 Mch. 1731/2; "Mrs. Honour Scott," on 15 Sept. 1761; and "Honour Phibson," on 7 Oct. 1746. The latter was probably their daughter, who seems to have married Samuel Phipson (*Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 277). Daniel Scott was churchwarden of Oldswinford in 1718 and 1719. The will of Daniel Scott, of Stourbridge, clothier, dated 6 Mch. 1731/2, was proved 2 Nov. 1732 in P.C.C. [274 Bedford], by Honour Scott, the widow, the residuary legatee and executrix. To his daughters, Honour Scott, Mary Scott and Phebe Scott, he bequeathed £300 apiece; but should any of them marry against his wife's consent, that legacy to be laid out in the purchase of land with the advice of his "brother" Gregory Hickman and his "cousin" Gregory Ford, and the income paid to such daughter and her issue. To son-in-law John Tugwell and his wife, £10. To son, Hickman Scott, £10 a year. Wits.: Benj. Harvey, Ann Blomsed, John Richards.

had been a daughter of Walter Moseley, of The Mere, Enville, a former High Sheriff of Staffordshire, by one of the Actons of Aldenham. This first wife had died in 1722, leaving one child, Dorothy; and Gregory Hickman had married again* and started a second family.† There can be little doubt that the young Johnson would often be a visitor to Green Close, which was standing until quite recently as the residence of one of Gregory Hickman's descendants, Dr. Alfred Freer, who sold it to the school authorities to satisfy a growing demand for space which had already caused the demolition of the picturesque old inn. Green Close, therefore, with its memories of Johnson, is now no more,‡ though its lawn still remains a lawn.

It has been thought that the well-known sonnet, "To Miss Hickman Playing on the Spinnet,"§ was addressed to Dorothy by Johnson at this time; but Dorothy—who afterwards married John Turton, M.D.,|| and became the mother of John Turton, F.R.S., Physician-in-Ordinary to George III,¶ who attended Goldsmith in his last illness**—was then a child of only twelve, when even a poet would scarcely picture "the Grecian king" as "resigning his thirst of empire to her charms." The sonnet, no doubt, belongs to 1731, when Johnson visited Stourbridge once again and was treated with much kindness by Gregory Hickman.††

Bishop Percy, himself a native of Bridgnorth, only some dozen miles from Stourbridge, says of this time that Johnson's

* Gregory Hickman, gentleman, and Mrs. Eliz. Law were married 10 Oct. 1723, by licence, at Oldbury, Salop (*inf. Rev. F. A. Homer*).

† *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, Tabular Pedigree XXVII.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 149. Mr. R. B. Adam, of Buffalo, tells me that the original manuscript is in his collection.

|| The Rev. F. A. Homer sends me a pedigree he has constructed showing Dr. John Turton the elder as one of the large family of Joseph Turton, of Wolverhampton, iron-monger (will dated 5 Apl. 1729, proved 18 Nov. 1729 in P.C.C. by Ann the relict), by Ann Clemson his wife, whom he married at Wolverhampton 17 Jany. 1694. This Joseph Turton's father, another Joseph Turton of Wolverhampton (admon. 1710), was son of John Turton [1610-1690], of Rowley Regis, yeoman, and grandson of John Turton, of Rowley Regis, nailor.

¶ Curiously enough, he succeeded Richard Warren in this office in 1797; see *ante*, p. 111.

** For a full account of Dr. Turton, see *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 111-12; and *Johnsonian Gleanings*, *ante*, I., 29, 30; II., 112-13.

†† *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 149.

genius was so distinguished that, although little better than a schoolboy, he was admitted into the best company of the place, and had no common attention paid to his conversation ; of which remarkable instances were long remembered there.*

It must be borne in mind that Johnson's natural status when he came to Stourbridge would be much better than that he held at Lichfield, where he was only known as the son of the local bookseller. At Stourbridge he became the nephew of Dr. Ford, for years the leading physician of the town ; the cousin of Cornelius Ford, fitted by education and talents to adorn the most brilliant society ; and the near connexion of the Hickmans, people, as we have seen, of considerable local consequence, who had intermarried with families of good descent. His uncle, Nathaniel Ford, who had married Gregory Hickman's sister,† was probably living at Stourbridge at the time ; certainly he was in the following year.‡

Then there was Mrs. Cornelius Ford, with aristocratic connexions in the background,§ and some very respectable ones in the neighbourhood. Her sister, Mary Crowley, had been married a generation before to Sampson Lloyd, the Birmingham Quaker : it was with their grandson, the third Sampson Lloyd, founder of Lloyds Bank, that Johnson had the altercation in 1766 with regard to Barclay's *Apology*.|| Boswell volunteers the not very surprising information that

Johnson had, from his early youth, been sensible to the influence of female charms. When at Stourbridge school, he was much enamoured of Olivia Lloyd, a young quaker, to whom he wrote a copy of verses, which I have not been able to recover.¶

This Olivia, then a girl of about eighteen, with a taste for the classics, was the youngest child of Sampson Lloyd and Mary Crowley,** and

* *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, ed. Birkbeck Hill, II., 208.

† See *ante*, p. 141.

‡ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 155.

§ See *ante*, p. 151.

|| Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, II., 458, and VI., liii. (addenda) ; *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 151. Sampson Lloyd the first, a considerable iron merchant, lived in Birmingham, at the Smallbrook end of Edgbaston Street, from about 1700 till his death in 1724 (Hill and Dent's *Memorials of the Old Square*, 1897, pp. 16, 101).

¶ Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 92.

** *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 151. She married Thomas Kirton in 1735, and died in 1775. Mr. T. O. Lloyd, of The Priory, Warwick (see *ante*, p. 147) tells me that he possesses a small oval portrait (? pastel), 10 inches high, of

therefore niece to Mrs. Cornelius Ford, who no doubt introduced her to Johnson. Sampson's eldest brother, Charles Lloyd,* married Sarah, another of the daughters of Ambrose Crowley. The Lloyds were an ancient Welsh family of county rank, but Charles Lloyd the elder, father of the two brothers, had joined the Friends and suffered much persecution.†

Gregory Hickman's brother-in-law, Richard Carless, who married Ann, another of Walter Moseley's daughters,‡ had by her a son, the Rev. Walter Carless, who married Johnson's "first love," Ann Hector.§ And this same Richard Carless married for his second wife a Mrs. Gibbons, whose daughter, Mary Gibbons, became the second wife of Ann's brother, and Johnson's beloved friend, Edmund Hector.|| These particulars will help to show to what an extent the Fords, the Hickmans, the Moseleys, the Actons, the Crowleys, the Lloyds, the Carlesses, and the Hectors formed a group of well-positioned families so interconnected that Johnson, from his own knowledge, could have traced some kinship or common tie with each one of them.¶

With the benefit of all this knowledge we need not be so surprised that the doors of the best houses in the neighbourhood opened to receive him, when to good social connexions he added intellectual gifts, and powers of conversation, of such an unusual order. According to Bishop Percy, "he had met even with George, afterwards Lord Lyttelton; with whom, having some colloquial disputes, he is supposed to have conceived that prejudice which so improperly influenced him in

Olivia Lloyd, at about the age of 20, artist's name unknown. He also says that Olivia had a great love for the Latin and Greek classics, and imbued her nephew Charles Lloyd [1748-1828], the philanthropist, with a similar enthusiasm, which he always acknowledged as owing to her teaching. Charles Lloyd's daughter Priscilla, wife of Christopher Wordsworth, Master of Trinity, passed these tastes on again to her children: her brother was Charles Lloyd the younger [1775-1839], poet and friend of Charles Lamb (see *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 151).

* This Charles Lloyd did not come from Wales to Birmingham until 1742, when he was aged 80; he died in 1748 (Hill and Dent's *Memorials of the Old Square*, 1897, p. 101).

† *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 151.

‡ See *ante*, pp. 157-8.

§ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 151-2.

|| *Ibid.*, p. 151.

¶ Those who wish to study the subject of these alliances in more detail must refer to my *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*. In 1916 Mr. T. A. Carless Attwood, F.S.A., printed privately a *Pedigree of the Family of Carless or Carles*, which exhibits the Carless ramifications in great fullness.

the Life of that worthy nobleman."* Percy thinks, however, that this incident must belong to a later period, as it "could scarcely have happened when he was a boy of fifteen." But Lyttelton was less than a year older than Johnson and there seems no reason why two precocious schoolboys of sixteen or seventeen should not have had "colloquial disputes": such things have been known to occur. Cornelius Ford, who lived within a mile of the Lytteltons' famous seat at Hagley, is sure to have known the family,† and he may quite likely have introduced the talented pair.‡ The altercation, apparently, could not have taken place during Johnson's visit to Stourbridge in or shortly before October 1731, as Lyttelton, who had embarked on the "grand tour" in 1728, did not return to England till "towards the close of 1731."§ It is interesting to have Johnson's confession that even as a boy he used always to choose the wrong side of a debate, because most ingenious things, that is to say, most new things, could be said upon it."||

It is unfortunate as regards Stourbridge School, as in the case of Lichfield,¶ that none of its old admission registers are known to exist, if indeed they were ever kept in those early days. An old library of books, presented to the school about 1665 by Henry Hickman, the controversialist,** great-uncle of Johnson's kind friend and connexion, Gregory Hickman, still remains, and we can imagine how our young scholar, greedy as ever for knowledge, must have pored over these fine folio volumes, which include Latin and Greek classics, as well as works on divinity, geography and history. For something like a century these books were disgracefully neglected, but they are now housed in a large cupboard.†† On the wainscoting of the school are carved the initials "S. J.": they are attributed to Johnson himself. There is a tradition, the value of which I cannot test, that one John Hickman was a master at the school while Johnson was a pupil there. If it be true, the individual must have been Gregory's first cousin,

* Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, II., 208.

† When his mother, Dr. Ford's widow, died in 1722, there was a sum of £100 due to her on a bond from Sir Thomas Lyttelton, the 4th bart., father of Lord Lyttelton (*Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 193).

‡ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 148.

§ *Dict. Nat. Biog.*

|| Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 441.

¶ See *ante*, p. 121.

** See *ante*, p. 139.

†† *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 109.

John Hickman, then a man of thirty-five, whose father had left money for him to be "bred a scholar at the University."* Richard Hickman, whose widow Gregory married, was John's eldest brother.†

It is quite possible that, while Johnson was at Stourbridge School, he may have paid visits to his mother's rich cousin, the widowed Mrs. Harriotts,‡ at the Manor House of Trysull, which is only some seven miles away. It is clear that the visit he paid in his early infancy was not the only one, else he could not have said that he "never yet saw a regular family, unless it were that of Mrs. Harriotts."§ Another attraction there would be his second cousin, Cornelius Jesson,|| a Balliol man almost twenty years his senior, who had just been appointed Vicar of Wombourn cum Trysull, no doubt through the agency of Mrs. Harriotts.¶

Johnson is said to have remained at Stourbridge "little more than a year," but whether this included the period of his stay with his cousin Cornelius Ford is not stated.** The evidence, however, points to his total stay there only having been about a year. For if he first went to Stourbridge in the autumn of 1725, and finally returned to Lichfield some twelve months later, it would make the period that elapsed between his return from Stourbridge and his entering Pembroke College, on 31 October 1728, just two years; and all the biographers agree in naming that as the length of his stay at home.††

While at Stourbridge School he gave various "proofs of his poetical genius, both in his school exercises and in other occasional compositions." Boswell obtained a good many of them from a "son" of Wentworth, the headmaster :‡‡ the very fact of their preservation shows how much his elders were struck by his work, as such things, in

* *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 150.

† *Ibid.*, Tabular Pedigree XXVII.

‡ See *ante*, p. 60.

§ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 143.

|| See *ante*, p. 32. He was nephew to the Cornelius Jesson who was Steward of Christ's Hospital (*ante*, p. 63); see *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, Tabular Pedigree XXIX.

¶ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

** Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 50.

†† *Ibid.*, I., 50, 56; Murphy's *Essay on the Life and Genius of Samuel Johnson*, 1792, p. 10; Hawkins's *Life of Johnson*, 1787, p. 9.

‡‡ Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 50. Wentworth was a bachelor; see *ante*, p. 156.

the ordinary course of events, quickly find their way to the waste-paper basket. Some verses which he dictated to Mrs. Thrale, at the age of sixty-eight, he told her "were planned, and even begun, when I was sixteen years old," but he had neglected to put them into finished form before.*

* Piozzi's *Anecdotes of the late Samuel Johnson*, 2nd ed. 1786, p. 47.

CHAPTER VIII

TWO YEARS AT HOME

1726-1728

Returns home from Stourbridge—His seventeenth birthday—Michael Johnson takes the oath of allegiance again—Why Samuel adopted no career—Humanity's gain by his "idleness"—Michael's shop his library—Boswell's original note on his reading at this period—Early mastery of Latin—Helps his father in the business—Learns to bind books—A very bad salesman—Fortunate in his local friends—The social position of a bookseller two hundred years ago—Gilbert Walmsley, his scholarly patron—Walmsley's deep and lasting influence—The Misses Aston—Charles Howard, the father-in-law of Erasmus Darwin—Pious John Martin—Theophilus Levett, the Town Clerk—Other local befrienders—Received at Dr. Hunter's board—His debt to Lichfield society—His interest in local families—Kinsfolk within walking distance of Lichfield—The Fords, the Abnets, and the Jessons—Family groups more closely knit in those days—Declines to write a prologue for the youthful Garrick—At length goes up to Oxford—Michael Johnson's poor circumstances : Mr. Rider's little loan—Mrs. Harriotts' legacy perhaps pays for college education—Johnson's remarkable equipment of knowledge for a "freshman."

As explained in the last chapter, we may conclude that Johnson returned to Lichfield about the autumn of 1726, when he was just completing his seventeenth year. On 27 August 1726 he acquired a Latin Dictionary,* and wrote his name, and the date, in the beginning.

* Now exhibited in the Johnson Birthplace, Lichfield. The title page is missing, but the dedication remains to Charles II by Adam Littleton [1627-94]—son of Thomas Littleton, Vicar of Halesowen—whose great Latin Dictionary was first published in 1673 (*Dict. Nat. Biog.*). There are several other signatures in the book, indicating a succession of owners. The oldest is that of "Leonard Pinckney, his booke," which occurs twice : the writing is that of an educated man born a generation or two before Johnson. "Leonard Pinkney, Gentleman Usher to the King, and Customer of Newcastle-upon-Tyne," died 24-28 Aug. 1731 ("Musgrave's Obituary," *Harleian Society*). The will of Leonard Pinckney, of Mansfield Woodhouse, co. Notts, Esq.,

But it is at the end of the volume that its main interest lies. For there he has written "Sam : Johnson, Septr. 7th 1726," while just below he has subtracted 1709 from 1726 and arrived at the result, 17, his exact age on that day.* It suggests that he was already beginning to worry about advancing years.

We have seen that in 1712 Michael Johnson, though an ardent Jacobite, "reconciled himself by casuistical arguments of expediency and necessity to take the oath imposed by the prevailing power."† We have documentary proof of his similar humiliation on a later occasion. On 7 October 1726, at the General Quarter Sessions held in the Guildhall of Lichfield, before Thomas Moore and Luke Robinson, gentlemen, bailiffs of the city, and Michael Johnson and Jonathan Kilbey, gentlemen, justices of the peace in the county of the city,‡ appeared certain persons to take the oath of Allegiance, Supremacy and Abjuration, pursuant to a statute of 1714. These persons were seven in number :—Tho. Moore, Will. Gamble, Luke Robinson, Mich. Johnson, Jona. Kilbey, Robt. Porter, and Tho. Gellibrand. It therefore appears that the four presiding magistrates themselves took the oaths in turn before their brothers. How poor Michael enjoyed swearing, with most vigorous emphasis, that the Pretender "hath not any right or title whatsoever to the Crowne of this realm," and that he did "renounce, refuse, and abjure any allegiance or obedience to him," we can only imagine, especially when he had to do it "without any Equivocacion, mentall Evasion, or secret reservacion whatsoever," and "upon the true faith of a Christian."§

Boswell says that Samuel Johnson, when he returned home from Stourbridge, "may be said to have loitered, for two years, in a state

was dated 14 Oct. 1726, and proved 9 Oct. 1731 in P.C.C. (261 Isham) by his widow Elizabeth, who is the only person mentioned in it, except his late mother, Mrs. Elizabeth Pinckney; the wits. were Grace White, Roger Mason, and F. Pilkington. "John Vernon, *Ejus Li*," and "John Vernon His Book," occur several times: his writing is more of an age with Johnson himself. Comparatively modern signatures are those of "George James Heatley—Ashby" [de la Zouch], and "Robert Thorneley." No doubt Leonard Pinckney was the original owner of the book: how it came to Johnson we do not know.

* See *ante*, p. 51.

† See *ante*, p. 67.

‡ Michael Johnson and Jonathan Kilbey were the Senior and Junior Bailiffs of the year before (Harwood's *Lichfield*, p. 432).

§ See *post*, IV., Appendix N.

very unworthy his uncommon abilities.”* Johnson himself thought that he had passed the time in idleness, and he “ was scolded by his father for his want of steady application. He had no settled plan of life, nor looked forward at all, but merely lived from day to day.”† Why he remained so long without definite employment or aim at this critical period of his life, when habits of idleness are apt to develop into an incurable lack of application, we are not told. No doubt many things combined to bring about this check in his career. With uncertain health, bad eyesight, an awkward frame, a disposition to melancholia, and an indisposition, retained through life, to sustained exertion or regular employment, it would have been hard indeed for Johnson to have obtained work of any kind, even had he been ready to sacrifice his inclination to scholarship. The poverty of his parents prevented them sending him to a University, and self-acquired learning, desultory however wide, was probably then, as now, not of much use for advancement in a world which, for the performance of regular duties, rightly demands a regular training.

Yet however much his friends and neighbours may have regretted, and however much we, obsessed by principle, may now at times regret, that Johnson should have apparently wasted these two years of his life, we must be honest and admit that humanity has gained by this temporary deflection, or interruption, of his career. He himself, indeed, asked Boswell not to think that he was really “ doing nothing then.”‡ As a matter of fact it was during this time that he acquired most of his extraordinarily wide knowledge of classical authors, which he could hardly have done under the restriction of the routine in a college, where, as he told Boswell, “ they seldom read any books but what are put into their hands by their tutors.”§ Indeed, he almost entirely eschewed even voyages and travels as “ works of mere amusement,” and confined himself closely to the best literature of the ancients.|| Bishop Percy told Boswell, of Johnson, that “ when a boy he was immoderately fond of reading romances of chivalry, and he retained his fondness for them through life.”¶ But at this period he must have checked his inclinations in that direction.

* Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 50.

† *Ibid.*, I., 57.

|| *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

† *Ibid.*, I., 56-7.

§ *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

¶ *Ibid.*, I., 49.

They do right who lay emphasis upon his being the son of a book-seller, whose trade offers such opportunities for self-culture as none other can afford. For it was his father's stock of books which formed his only library at an age when his mind would be most subject to intellectual impressions and his imagination most easily stimulated. Beyond confining himself to standard literature, he followed no special "scheme of study," but "read a great deal in a desultory manner," "as chance threw books in his way, and inclination directed him through them."* Boswell's original note on his early reading is worth quoting here†:—

ASHBOURNE, 20 September 1777.

Dr. Johnson told me that he had been allways idle; that his most determinate application had been within these ten years in reading Greek—that the reading which he had loved most was metaphysicks; but he had not read much even in that way. That he very early loved to read poetry but hardly ever read any poem to an end. That he read in Shakespeare at a very early time of life, so early that he remembers being afraid to read the speech of the Ghost in Hamlet when alone.‡ That Horace's Odes have been the compositions in which he has taken most delight. That it was long before he liked to read his Epistles and Satires.§ That he imagined his brother had hid some apples in his Father's shop, and in climbing up to look for them he had found Petrarch in which he read keenly, having never seen his works before, and having a strong desire to see them from having read in the Preface to [blank] translation of [blank] || that he was the restorer of Poetry. That what made him first think of forming his style as we find it was reading Sir William Temple and about twenty lines by Chambers of a Proposal for his Dictionary.¶

Murphy, in his account of Johnson's youth, tells us that "his reading was always desultory, seldom resting on any particular author, but rambling from one book to another, and, by hasty snatches, hoarding up a variety of knowledge."** In 1763 Johnson remarked to Boswell, rather sadly, that "I knew almost as much at eighteen as

* Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 57.

† From Adam's *Facsimile of Boswell's Notebook*.

‡ See *ante*, p. 88.

§ See Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 70.

|| Boswell left these blanks hoping to be able to supply the name of the book and its translator. But his enquiries were unsuccessful in this case, for when he revised his account of the incident for the printer he could only say weakly that "the large folio proved to be Petrarch, whom he had seen mentioned in some preface" (Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 57).

¶ See Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 218–19.

** Murphy's *Essay on the Life and Genius of Samuel Johnson*, 1792, p. 9.

I do now " *; and in the last year of his life told Windham " that he read Latin with as much ease when he went to College as at present."† According to Shaw, his earliest biographer,‡ " he is said, when a mere schoolboy, to have read indefatigably and probably picked up no despicable acquaintance with books, by occasionally attending his father's shop."§

There is no doubt that Johnson did to some extent help his father in the business during these two years at home, if with little advantage to the business. He even boasted to Thomas Cadell in 1779 :—" I was bred a Bookseller, and have not forgotten my trade."|| Murphy concluded that, when Johnson returned from Stourbridge to his father's house, he " was probably intended for the trade of a book-seller. He has been heard to say that he could bind a book."¶ Hawkins says the same thing.** It is certain that he did master what to him must have been the very distasteful art of bookbinding, a fact known to Mrs. Piozzi.†† Mr. Major Morgan, who was to a certain extent the successor to the bookselling business founded by Michael Johnson,‡‡ related to Stebbing Shaw how, " in the latter part of his

* Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 445.

† *Diary of William Windham*, ed. Mrs. Henry Baring, 1866, p. 17.

‡ See *ante*, p. 97.

§ *Memoirs of Dr. Samuel Johnson* [by William Shaw], 1785, p. 14.

|| *Letters of Samuel Johnson*, ed. Birkbeck Hill, II., 89. There is no record at Stationers' Hall of his having been apprenticed to his father (*inf.* Mr. R. I. Rivington).

¶ Murphy's *Essay on the Life and Genius of Samuel Johnson*, 1792, p. 10.

** Hawkins's *Life of Johnson*, 1787, p. 9.

†† Piozzi's *Letters to and from the late Samuel Johnson*, 1788, I., 375.

‡‡ Major Morgan was Sheriff of Lichfield in 1767, and Junior Bailiff in 1799 (*Harwood's Lichfield*, pp. 435, 437). In Sept. 1785 Johnson's birthplace was sold to him by the executors (see *post*, IV., Appendix A). On old Mrs. Johnson's death in 1759 the business had devolved upon Catherine Chambers (see *ante*, p. 119), and after her death in 1767 is said to have been carried on by one Bailey (perhaps William Bailie, the printer—see *ante*, p. 133), though in 1781 the tenant was an ironmonger named Hinde. Major Morgan did not conduct his business in the Birthplace, which was never used for bookselling again, but in his shop at 43 Market Square, just over the way : he died in 1802. It is said that the ultimate residue of Michael Johnson's stock passed into the hands of Major Morgan, though *when* does not appear (*Alfred Charles Lomax : An Appreciation* [by Alfred D. Parker], Lichfield, 1912, pp. 3-4). In 1799 " M. Morgan of Lichfield " published a catalogue of over 10,000 volumes, " including several Old Articles from the Stock of Dr. Johnson's father, and the Entire library of Sam. Whaley, of Fotherley, near Lichfield." I have not seen this catalogue ; concerning Samuel Whaley, see Hill and Dent's *Memorials of the Old Square* (Birmingham), 1897, p. 43. When Johnson made the codicil to his will, in 1784, the Birthplace

life," the Doctor once came into his shop at Lichfield, and, taking up one of the books, remarked that he "recollected the binding to be the work of his own hands."*

But Johnson was clearly not fitted for a business career. He was often so wrapped up in his reading that he failed to attend even to his father's best customers, and when reproved for his inattention he remarked "that to supersede the pleasures of reading, by the attentions of traffic, was a task he never could master."† In all probability it was during this period that on one occasion he "refused to attend his father to Uttoxeter-market," a rare act of filial disobedience for which he did such touching penance when he was old and famous.‡

The influence of his father's books was not the only one to which he owed much in the development of his intellectual faculties at this time. We have seen that he had been particularly fortunate in the quality of his school companions :§ he was no less fortunate now in the quality of those friends of maturer years who, attracted by his uncommon abilities, admitted him to the intimacy of their homes. It was greatly to his gain that there were in Lichfield then quite a number of men of culture and intellectual tastes, and men whose well-ordered homes and social advantages had not made them grow blind to the essential nobility of scholarship, even when found in the son of a local tradesman. Perhaps too much emphasis has been laid upon the obscurity of his origin—an obscurity which he was rather apt at times himself to exaggerate||—for, as we have seen, his father had won quite a respectable position, while his mother came of a good middle-class stock. It must be borne in mind that tradesmen of all kinds at that time occupied relatively quite a different position from what they do nowadays. It is even more impossible to compare social values of a

was then "in the tenure or occupation of Mrs. Bond, of Lichfield, aforesaid, or of Mr. Hinchman, her under-tenant" (Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, IV., 402-3). When it was conveyed next year to Major Morgan, it was in the occupation of Charles Hinckesman, Junior Bailiff of Lichfield in 1784 (see *post*, IV., Appendix A). Perhaps Major Morgan bought the remains of Michael Johnson's stock on the death of Catherine Chambers in 1767: certainly he was established as a bookseller in Lichfield as early as 1764 (Hill's *Bookmakers of Old Birmingham*, p. 68), and in 1768 (Shaw's *Staffordshire*, vol. II., "Advertisement," p. xix).

* Shaw's *Staffordshire*, I., 324.

† *Memoirs of Dr. Samuel Johnson* [by William Shaw], 1785, pp. 14-15.

‡ Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, IV., 373.

§ See *ante*, pp. 121-37.

|| See *ante*, p. 106.

bygone period with those obtaining at the present day than it is to express satisfactorily in figures the difference in the value of money then and now.* But it is made very evident to all those who interest themselves in family history that the intense stigma which now attaches to retail trade is of comparatively modern growth and is not reflected with nearly the same definiteness in the records of the past. The great complication in the machinery of existence, with improved organization and improved methods of transport added to all the results of the introduction of steam and electrical power and to the practical fruits of scientific discovery, has led to the growth of an immense and powerful class of merchants, manufacturers, and middlemen, to which has been attracted the best business brains of the community ; while it has led to the birth of innumerable subsidiary occupations and professions that had never been heard of in the days when cadets of county families who had not a taste for the church, for the law, or for soldiering, went up to London and became grocers and mercers and ironmongers and tallow-chandlers, with less loss of prestige than if they to-day were to become chartered accountants, or stockbrokers, or average adjusters, or underwriters, or electrical engineers. The retail trader, therefore, taking him in the bulk, now represents a man of inferior education and inferior enterprise, and as such he has rightly lost social caste. Social history proves that there is no very essential prejudice against the shopkeeper ; but the man who continues to stand behind the counter while his abler and more enterprising brothers devote themselves to the more skilled and lucrative work of manufacture, organization, and distribution, must not complain if in course of time he comes to be looked upon as their inferior in every way.

Bookselling, like other retail trades, certainly was not looked down upon in Michael Johnson's day to the extent that it is now. In the natural course of events, for instance, one would never find to-day the son of a lawyer being apprenticed to a provincial bookseller, as Simon Martin was to Michael Johnson ;† or a clergyman of good family like Gilbert White claiming a bookseller brother ; or a retired naval officer setting up shop in London, as did the founder of the eminent house of Murray.

* See *ante*, pp. 47-8.

† See *ante*, p. 13.

Chief among the local friends of young Samuel Johnson was Gilbert Walmsley, Registrar of the Ecclesiastical Court, his senior by nearly thirty years, and, according to Miss Seward, "the most able scholar and the finest gentleman in Lichfield, or its environs."* Son of William Walmsley, M.P. for Lichfield, and Chancellor of the Diocese from 1698 to 1713, by Dorothy Gilbert his wife,† he occupied a high social position, and in the Bishop's Palace in the Close, where he lived for thirty years, he dispensed a liberal hospitality. Above all others he appears to have appreciated the genius of the local bookseller's son. No doubt he had spent many happy hours in Michael Johnson's shop, poring over the volumes he loved.‡ In his life of Edmund Smith,

* *Seward's Poetical Works*, ed. Walter Scott, vol. I., p. lxix.

† *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 231. "Mr. William Walmsley, Chancell. buried" 18 July 1713 at Lichfield Cathedral. "Mr. William Walmsley and Dorothy Gilbert," married there 22 Apl. 1675 (Harwood's *Lichfield*, p. 298). She was youngest of the three daughters and coheirs of Humphrey Gilbert, of Fradley, near Lichfield, by Elizabeth his wife, daughter of Richard Tompson, of Glascote, Warwicks, and was aged 6 in 1665 ("Staffordshire Pedigrees," *Harleian Society*, vol. 63, p. 106).

‡ There are at Pembroke College several receipted bills for books purchased by Gilbert Walmsley from Michael Johnson, and afterwards from Mrs. Johnson and her son Nathaniel, during the years 1727-35 (*Letters of Samuel Johnson*, ed. Birkbeck Hill, I., 83-4). At this same reference, and in his *Boswell*, I., 79-80, Dr. Birkbeck Hill has fallen into a very curious trap, for which he may well be excused. Among the Johnson MSS. preserved at Pembroke College are two letters from James Bate, of Ashby de la Zouch, and one from "D. Johnson," of Swarkeston, co. Derby, which Dr. Hill prints in full at these references, with the Walmsley receipts. "D. Johnson's" letter, dated 21 Aug. 1733, evidently to Gilbert Walmsley, says that the books are being sent herewith, with an account for £5 6s. 4d., the balance unpaid out of a total of £26 6s. 4d. James Bate's first letter, dated 31 Jan. 1735 (? 1735/6), is also to Walmsley, and written on behalf of "my sister Johnson," who wants payment of £5 6s. 4d., "for the parcell of books you had of her at Swarkstone." She "wase," continues Mr. Bate, "obliged to sell of the studey of books at a loe rate to turn it into money." It appears that the bill had been sent to "Mr. John Newton a Sider Seller at Litchfield" (father of Thomas Newton, Bishop of Bristol—see *ante*, p. 123), as intermediary, who returned it with mention of what Walmsley said was an error in the amount. James Bate's second letter, dated 19 Apl. 1736, is written direct to Mr. Newton, and begs him to prevail with "Mr. Wumsley" to pay the little money due to the writer's sister, who "had but little left by Mr. Johnson but his books (not but he left her all he had) & those sold at a poore reat." He asks Mr. Newton to "doe y^r best for the widow," who did not relish being "kept out of so small a sume by a gentleman so well able to paye." From endorsements on the letter it appears that Walmsley paid £5 to Newton in settlement of this long-standing account.

Now the donor of these documents to Pembroke (no doubt the Rev. Samuel Hay Parker—see *ante*, p. 112) must have thought they referred to Johnson's kinsfolk. Dr. Birkbeck Hill accepted them without question, and even cited James Bate's

whom Walmsley had known personally, Johnson paid a noble tribute, instinct with affection and respect, to the memory of his early patron, at whose table, in company with Robert James and David Garrick, he confesses to have "enjoyed many chearful and instructive hours." Walmsley, a man of means and adequate leisure, was not a professed

second letter as evidence that Michael Johnson "did not die a bankrupt," suggesting that "D. Johnson" was perhaps the bookseller's executor. But the "Mr. Johnson" whose "study of books" had been sold was not Michael, but the Rev. Anthony Johnson, Vicar of Ashby de la Zouch 1711-15, and Rector of Swarkeston from 1728 till his death in April 1732; while "D. Johnson" was his widow Dorothy [1680-1752], daughter of Thomas Bate [1648-1707], of Ashby de la Zouch, and sister of James Bate [1678-1757], as well as of the Rev. Thomas Bate [1675-1727], Fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge, and Rector of Swarkeston 1720-27, who bequeathed a library of standard works to the church of Ashby de la Zouch (see *Ex Libris Journal*, vol. XIV., 1905). The Rev. Anthony Johnson married Dorothy Bate in 1717, but they had no issue. See pedigree of Bate family in *Miscellanea Genealogica et Heraldica*, new series, II., 488-91, by J. Paul Rylands, F.S.A., who descends from Mrs. Anthony Johnson's sister Elizabeth, wife of Joseph Palmer, and to whom I am indebted for assistance in clearing up this little mystery. Mr. Rylands was interested to learn that his kinsfolk had been admitted to the Johnsonian circle without proper credentials!

Dr. Birkbeck Hill prints also, sandwiched in with the documents already referred to, a memorandum, presumably from Michael Johnson, addressed to Gilbert Walmsley, informing him that "Monday and Tuesday the third and fourth of Sept^r will be y^e last day's of our attending the sale, and on which days we shall return half a Crown in the Pound, for all books that may be bought on those two day's. I shall be glad to have your company." I do not think that this sale would be that of the Rev. Anthony Johnson's books, because between 1722 and 1739 Monday only once fell on 3 Sept., and that was in 1733, a fortnight after Walmsley's purchases from the cleric's library had been despatched to him. This point, however, might be argued.

Anthony, son of Christopher Johnson, of Goldon (*sc.* Cauldon), co. Staff., *pauper puer*, matric. 17 Mch. 1675-6, aged 18, at All Souls' College, Oxford, and took his B.A. in 1679, and his M.A. in 1682 (Foster's *Alumni Oxonienses*). I do not know his clerical record prior to 1711. In 1730 he published an octavo pamphlet entitled *An Historical Account of the several English Translations of the Bible*, described as by Anthony Johnson, A.M., Rector of Swarkeston in Derbyshire, and printed for Rivington (Nichols's *Literary Illustrations*, III., 673). The will of Anthony Johnson, of Swarkeston, co. Derby, Presbyter of the Church of England, was dated 15 Sept. 1730, and proved 9 May 1732 at Lichfield, by Dorothy Johnson the relict and sole extrix; the wits. were George Pilkington and James Bate. "I die in safe communion of the Church of England, in which (by God's blessing) I have always lived, and I desire to be buried in the church yard of the parish where I shall die." He leaves £5 to his niece Isabel White of Ashburne Green for the care of his sister, her mother, in her last illness; a guinea to his wife's niece Mrs. Ann Drury, of Nottingham; £2 to his niece Mary Barton, of Ticknal, widow; and £2 to his niece Hannah Shardler, of Aston; as well as £1 to poor of Swarkeston.

Will of Christopher Johnson, of Cauldon, co. Staff., yeoman, dated 21 Apl. 1686. To my son Anthony Johnson, £20, and the two year old filly and best bed. To my son-in-law Simon Wood £20, and to his son Thomas Wood £5 to bind him apprentice to a trade, and £10 to set him up when his apprenticeship is expired, if he take good

scholar, but a many-sided man who in his youth had moved much in "the gay world."* In 1698, at the age of seventeen, he had entered Trinity College, Oxford, and in 1707 been called to the bar at the Inner Temple.† Always with the tastes of a student, his reading had been extraordinarily wide, and his general learning was so extensive, and his faculty for communicating it so remarkable, that Johnson acknowledged to scarcely a day in after life on which he did not feel

ways and be careful. To Robert Wilson, £20, and to the children by my daur., £5 both. To William Sideways, my son-in-law, £15. To Richard Rainsedale, my son-in-law, £10. If her honour the Countess of Ardglass pays my exors. the money she owes me, then Richard Rainsedale to have £5 more. To Thomas Bloer, my son-in-law, and his wife, 12d. each for gloves. To Anthony Wharton, my son-in-law, for Christopher Wharton his son. To Francis Shaw, of Waterfall, husbandman, the red cow calf which I bought of Ralph Pegg. To Ralph Tunncliffe and Anthony Wharton, all my goods and chattels to pay all my debts, funeral charges and legacies, and make them exors. Signed, Christopher Johnson (*mark*). Wits., Bonaventura Ratcliff (*mark*), Jonah [? or Josiah] Salt (*mark*), and Tho. Malbon. Proved 30 Apl. 1686 at Lichfield by both exors. Inventory dated 29 Apl. 1686; total £477 7s.; appraisers, John Fox, Ralph Johnson, Francis Berisford, and Stephen Dennis.

Will of Anthony Johnson, of Cold Eaton, co. Derby, yeoman [evidently a very near relative of preceding], dated 13 Aug. 1669. To be buried in church of Alsop in le Dale, near as may be to my late wife Thomasin. To Anthony Johnson of Cold Eaton and Elizabeth his daur., 10s. To Ann, daur. of Christopher Johnson of Caldengrange, 5s. To Stephen Denis, my son-in-law, and to Jone his wife, my daur., £20. To Elizabeth and Mary, their daurs., £2. To Ralph Johnson, my son-in-law, and Thomasin his wife, my daur., £10 each. To their children, John, Mary, Ann and Sarah, 20s. To Francis Berisford, my son-in-law, and Ann his wife, my daur., £5, and all my beds, bedclothes, pewter, brass, arks, coffers, tables, forms, shelves, chairs, etc. To their children Anthony, Henry, Jane, Thomasin and Nathaniel, £5. Exors., Ralph Johnson and Steven Denis. Signed, Anthony Johnson (*mark*). Wits., John Johnson, John Fynney. Proved 11 Oct. 1670, at Lichfield, by both exors. Inventory dated 12 Sept. 1670; total £57 10s.; appraisers, John Fynney, John Johnson, Christopher Johnson.

A licence was issued at Lichfield, 19 Apl. 1670, for a marriage between Anthony Wharton, of Alton, co. Staff., aged 40, and Anne Johnson, aged 24; surety, Christopher Johnson, of Caldron Grange, co. Staff. The pedigree of these Johnsons could, no doubt, be traced much more fully. The wills of Christopher Johnson, of Alstonfield, proved at Lichfield in 1640; of Anthony Johnson, of Whitwell, proved there in 1650; and of Christopher Johnson, of Alstonfield, proved there 1669/70, might help to elucidate it. I have no evidence to indicate cousinship with Dr. Johnson, but the two families both seem to have had their roots in the Ashburne area (see *ante*, p. 2). The will of William Johnson, the elder, of Alstonfield, proved at Lichfield 1687/8, mentions sons John, Richard, Anthony and William; but I have no further particulars. Christopher Johnson, from "Kyddesley" (Kedleston), co. Derby, was master of Winchester School 1560-70, and a medical man of some note (Foster's *Alumni Oxonienses* and *Dict. Nat. Biog.*).

* *Johnson's Lives of the English Poets*, ed. Birkbeck Hill, II., 21, 23.

† Foster's *Alumni Oxonienses*.

the benefit of their intellectual converse. Politically opposed to Johnson—"a whig, with all the virulence and malevolence of his party"—he never made that a ground for difference.* Walmsley married Magdalen, the fourth of the eight daughters of Sir Thomas Aston, the third baronet.† Boswell tells us that Johnson "passed much time in his early years" with a number of superior Lichfield families.

In most of them, he was in the company of ladies, particularly at Mr. Walmsley's, whose wife and sisters-in-law, of the name of Aston, and daughters of a Baronet, were remarkable for good breeding.‡

But when Johnson was a boy Gilbert Walmsley was a bachelor; for his wife was approximately the same age as Johnson and so a generation younger than her husband; and he did not marry her until 1736.§ If Johnson's acquaintanceship with the Misses Aston—particularly his beloved Molly Aston—arose from the marriage of Gilbert Walmsley to Magdalen Aston, he cannot have known these charming young ladies in his boyhood. He says that Walmsley "was of an advanced age, and I was only not a boy," at the time of their early intimacy;|| though Garrick, we know, was an everyday visitor at Walmsley's house from his earliest childhood.¶

Another of the early patrons of Johnson, according to Boswell, was "Mr. Howard,"** and the same authority speaks of meeting, at a much later date, "Mr. Howard, of Lichfield, at whose father's house Johnson had in his early years been kindly received."†† The references are to the Charles Howards, father and son. The father was less than three years Johnson's senior, and by birth he was not much, if any, the

* Johnson's *Lives of the English Poets*, ed. Birkbeck Hill, II., 21.

† Ormerod's *Cheshire*, ed. Helsby, I., 725.

‡ Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 82.

§ *Dict. Nat. Biog.*

|| Johnson's *Lives of the English Poets*, ed. Birkbeck Hill, II., 20. Miss Seward, writing in 1763, asserted that "the school-boys, David Garrick and Samuel Johnson"—whom she describes as a "huge, overgrown, mis-shapen and probably dirty stripling"—met, at Mr. Walmsley's "plentiful board," "two or three evenings every week" (*Seward's Poetical Works*, ed. Walter Scott, vol. I., p. lxix). But Johnson was not actually a schoolfellow of Garrick, who was over seven years his junior (see *ante*, p. 132); and it seems pretty clear that Johnson was not intimate with Mr. Walmsley till after he had left school.

¶ *Private Correspondence of David Garrick*, 1831, vol. I., p. 2.

** Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 80.

†† *Ibid.*, III., 222.

superior of the bookseller's son. The younger son of yet another Charles Howard, a Lichfield clothworker, who died in 1717, his mother in 1722 became the second wife of John Martin, the apothecary, brother to Michael Johnson's apprentice, Simon Martin.* She died in October, 1737, six months after the marriage of her stepdaughter, Elizabeth Martin, to Carey Butt.† Probably it was at the house of old Charles Howard's widow, when she had become Mrs. Martin, that Johnson was made welcome. Johnson remembered John Martin as "a pious man," whose son-in-law, the aforesaid Carey Butt, used to lead him into St. Mary's Church, on a weekday, "and place him in his seat, and then go about his business."‡ According to the biographer of Mrs. Cameron, granddaughter of Carey Butt,

this John Martin was a noted man, a bookseller [*sic*] at Lichfield, whose house was the *rendezvous* of all the literati of that day or neighbourhood. He was a man of great integrity, and is mentioned in Sir J. Hawkins's *Life of Johnson* as a holy man.§

Charles Howard the second, though of undistinguished birth, won a good position for himself in Lichfield, where he practised law until his death in 1771.|| His marriage in 1734 to a Foley of Prestwood¶ must have improved his status, and probably benefited his pocket. Johnson tells Lucy Porter, in 1759, after his mother's death, that, if she requires directions, "Mr. Howard will advise you";** and in 1763 recommends Dr. Taylor to "consult our old friend Mr. Howard," who "is in himself a cool and wise man."†† His two surviving children,

* See *ante*, pp. 13, 132; and *post*, IV., Appendix G.

† *Ibid.*

‡ "The celebrated Dr. Johnson said to my uncle, Dr. George Butt, 'Sir, your father was a pious man, so was your grandfather Mr. Martin. Your father used to lead Mr. Martin into church, on a week-day, and place him in his seat and then go about his business.'" Extract from MS. in handwriting of Rev. Thomas Butt [1777?-1841], in possession of his granddaughter, Lady Bosanquet. Information of Rev. G. H. Cameron, Archdeacon of Johannesburg. The story must apply to the period between 1737, when Carey Butt married, and 1745, when John Martin died. See *post*, IV., Appendix G. John Martin was Sheriff of Lichfield in 1725, when Michael Johnson was Senior Bailiff (Harwood's *Lichfield*, p. 432).

§ *Life of Mrs. Cameron*, p. 213. I do not know of any such reference by Hawkins.

|| See *ante*, p. 133. Croker says that Mr. Howard was a Proctor in the Ecclesiastical Court and resided in the Close. Napier's *Boswell*, I., 46.

¶ See *post*, IV., Appendix G.

** *Letters of Samuel Johnson*, ed. Birkbeck Hill, I., 82.

†† *Ibid.*, I., 104.

Charles Howard the third [1742-91], and Mary Howard [1740-70], who married Erasmus Darwin and grandmothered Charles Darwin, quite consolidated the family's social gains.*

Another of Johnson's early friends, according to Boswell, was "Mr. Levett."† This would be Theophilus Levett, of whom we have already heard,‡ Richard Wakefield's successor in the offices of Coroner and Town Clerk. To him Samuel Johnson and his mother mortgaged the house in the Market Square in 1739.§ His son, John Levett, born in 1721, went up to Brasenose, Oxford, in 1739, in 1743 was called to the Bar, and in 1761 was elected M.P. for Lichfield, though unseated soon afterwards on petition.|| Presumably this was the John Levett who had to exercise so much forbearance in regard to payments of interest on the mortgage, though Johnson's gratitude to him in 1744, "on account of a long series of kindness to my father and myself,"¶ seems to conflict in the matter of dates with this identification.**

Other respectable houses in Lichfield at which the youthful Johnson received hospitality, according to Boswell, were those of "Dr. Swinfen," his godfather, who, however, removed to Birmingham in 1727;†† "Mr. Simpson"—Stephen Simpson, father of Johnson's friend Joseph Simpson;‡‡ and "Captain Garrick, father of the great ornament of the British stage."§§ To those whom Boswell expressly mentions, we may safely add the names of his other godfather, Richard Wakefield,||| and the Hectors.¶¶

And we must not forget that, according to the Rev. Henry White, the grandson of Hunter, "young Johnson had ever familiar access to the house and table of his intelligent and worthy master."*** This was no doubt after his schooldays were over and the breach with Hunter

* See *post*, IV., Appendix G.

† Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 81.

‡ See *ante*, p. 90.

§ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 277; and *post*, IV., Appendix A.

|| *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 213.

¶ *Letters of Samuel Johnson*, ed. Birkbeck Hill, I., 15.

** See my account of the Levett family, *post*, IV., Appendix L.

†† See *ante*, p. 54.

‡‡ See *ante*, p. 133; and *post*, IV., Appendix J; and Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 346.

§§ Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 80-81.

||| See *ante*, p. 55.

¶¶ See *ante*, p. 125.

*** Nichols's *Literary Illustrations*, VII., 362.

had been healed.* At this time Hunter's household was presided over by his second wife,† sister of the Henry Porter whose widow Johnson was afterwards to marry. Mrs. Hunter's "frugality and good management" won recognition in her husband's will.‡

Altogether, this Lichfield circle of friends constituted quite a remarkable group of men, whose society must have exercised a really formative influence on Johnson, and have helped at least to give him that "complaisance" of manner which ladies of birth assured Boswell he possessed even in his early manhood.§ However rough and boorish Johnson may sometimes have appeared, there is no doubt that he always bore himself with confidence in whatever society he was placed—not the confidence of one ignorant of, or indifferent to, recognized social values, but rather of a man whose punctilious regard for distinctions of rank was combined with the scholar's proud assurance of his own essential equality with those belonging by birth to a much larger and more enlightened world.

Looking back at this little social group, it is curious to contemplate how such men, excellent in their lives and important in their place and generation, are now remembered only because of the kindnesses they extended to the bookseller's son, whom, in spite of his original abilities, they can never have looked upon without some feeling of patronage.

What a keen interest Johnson himself maintained through life in the old families of Lichfield is evidenced by the occasion in 1770 when Richard Greene, the local antiquary,|| found a book which gave particulars of "who paid levies in our parish, and how much they paid, above an hundred years ago." He studied this book with absorbed attention, and was struck by the large proportion of families that had become extinct in the town.¶

As has already been made evident, Johnson had numerous kinsfolk in the Birmingham area, and, accustomed as he was to travel considerable distances on foot, it is very probable that he would visit

* See *ante*, pp. 153-4.

† See *ante*, p. 153.

‡ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 245.

§ Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 82.

|| See *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 145.

¶ *Letters of Samuel Johnson*, ed. Birkbeck Hill, I., 162.

some of them in these days of comparative freedom. His uncle Andrew Johnson lived in Birmingham itself ;* as did also another uncle, the very objectionable John Harrison.† Nathaniel Ford had probably left Sutton Coldfield by this time for Stourbridge ;‡ but Samuel Ford, now his mother's eldest surviving brother, was very likely living in or close to Birmingham.§ First cousins he had in plenty, though of many of his mother's nephews and nieces we know very little.|| Of some of his second cousins we know more. The grandchildren of his mother's uncle, Henry Ford the attorney, still lived on in Handsworth, at The Manwoods, the house which that litigious old gentleman had built for himself over forty years before.¶ Charles Abnet, one of these grandchildren, died at The Manwoods in 1730.** Robert Abnet, a brother of Charles, was an apothecary in the town of Stafford ; he married a daughter of the Rev. William Wight, by Ursula his wife, daughter of Sir Francis Wolryche, second baronet. Mrs. Robert Abnet was probably the "grave widow gentlewoman" alluded to by Thomas Carte in 1738.††

Then there were his numerous second cousins on the Jesson side,‡‡ of one of whom, the Rev. Cornelius Jesson, we have already heard as Vicar of Wombourne cum Trysull.§§ This cleric's younger brother, Thomas Jesson, lived, like his predecessors, at West Bromwich, where his uncle, Thomas Jesson the elder, who left no children, had about 1680 built a fine house called Oakwood, which he panelled beautifully with oak. This house continued to be the residence of the Jessons for generations ; and it is interesting to know that its site was a piece of land purchased by their ancestor Henry Ford, Johnson's great-grandfather, as far back as 1639, which Henry Ford the younger, of Clifford's Inn, Johnson's great-uncle, sold to his nephew, Thomas Jesson the elder, in 1679.|||| Oakwood still stands in its old form : in 1914 the late Rev. Thomas Jesson presented it to the West Bromwich Corporation, on condition that the house was preserved, together with

* See *ante*, p. 108.

† See *ante*, p. 106.

‡ See *ante*, p. 159.

§ See *ante*, p. 45 ; and *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 154.

|| *Ibid.*, Tabular Pedigree XXIX.

¶ See *ante*, p. 33.

** *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 130-31.

†† *Johnsonian Gleanings*, *ante*, I., 7.

‡‡ See *ante*, p. 32.

§§ See *ante*, p. 162.

|||| *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 135.

sufficient land for a recreation ground.* Thomas Jesson the younger was doubly connected with Johnson, for his wife, whom he had just married, was a niece of the Jane Chambers who had married Johnson's uncle Samuel Ford in 1707, and a sister of Richard Chambers, Prebendary of Hereford.†

Kinship, in these days of constant migration, often counts for very little, especially in the case of town-dwellers. But two hundred years ago that spirit of clanship, which even now we find very strong in country districts, was much more in evidence, and we can be pretty sure that all these cousins of Johnson's—Fords, Abnets, Jessons and others—were, generally speaking, known to him and to each other. We have but to study the will of his mother's rich cousin, Mrs. Harriotts,‡ to remove any serious doubt on the point.§

That celebrated little occasion when the youthful Garrick made his first appearance as an actor-manager, in Farquhar's *Recruiting Officer*, which he and his friends produced at home for the diversion of their relatives, is attributed to 1727, and is said to have been marred by Johnson's failure to write a Prologue.||

This two years of inactivity apparently barren, yet in reality wonderfully fruitful, marks the close of Johnson's boyhood. On 31 October 1728, some seven weeks after he had entered his twentieth year, his career received a fresh impetus and he became a member of the University of Oxford.¶

The circumstances which allowed him to take this step, after it had been so long deferred, are veiled in obscurity. Many suggestions have been made as to how it became possible. Michael Johnson was undoubtedly in low water financially at this time, as indeed he was during all the later portion of his life.** Not much more than two years before Samuel's translation to Oxford, we find Michael so hard pressed

* *Inf. Rev.* Thomas Jesson, his son, now Vicar of Hucclecote, Gloucester. See *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 138.

† See *ante*, p. 42; and *post*, IV., Appendix E.

‡ See *ante*, p. 60.

§ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 193-5.

|| *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick*, by Thomas Davies, 1784, I., pp. 4-6; Percy Fitzgerald's *Life of Garrick*, new. ed. 1899, p. 7.

¶ *Birkbeck Hill's Boswell*, I., 58.

** See *ante*, pp. 94, 102.

for cash that he has to borrow ten guineas from Richard Rider, afterwards Chancellor of the Diocese of Lichfield,* who was a personal friend of Samuel's godfathers, Richard Wakefield† and Dr. Swynfen‡ —of the latter's will he was, indeed, executor.§

There is, however, one important fact that was not known to the biographers. In February 1727/8 the rich old Mrs. Harriotts|| died at Trysull, leaving to her cousin Mrs. Johnson "Fourty Pounds for her owne separate use and one paire of my best Flaxen Sheets and pillow Coates, A large pewter dish and a dozen of pewter plates." These household gods would be very welcome to Mrs. Johnson, even if her cousin's "gold lockett ring," her two "gold locketts," and her "Diamond Ring with Eleaven stones in it," were bestowed elsewhere.|| But the money must have been even more welcome. Forty pounds does not seem a large capital sum now, but in those days it was probably equal to several hundreds in modern money, and the question arises whether it may not have been this legacy which encouraged the Johnsons, later in the year, to send their son to Oxford, in fulfilment of what had probably been their ambition ever since his remarkable abilities had become manifest in childhood. Mrs. Harriotts' will was proved early in March,** but the money, which was not to be paid until Michael Johnson had given a bond undertaking not to touch it himself,†† probably did not come immediately. We have already seen that there was not much love lost between Michael Johnson and Mrs.

* Mr. R. B. Adam, of Buffalo, tells me he has the following receipt in his collection and that the handwriting is undoubtedly the same as that of the "draft defence" (see *ante*, p. 92) reproduced in my book (*Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, p. 214):—"Feb. ye 21st 1726. Borrowed then of Mr. Rich. Rider the sume of Ten Guineas (10-10-0) which I promise to repay upon demand. Witness my hand, MICH. JOHNSON." Richard, son of Richard Rider, of par. of St. Ann, Middlesex, gent., matric. 26 June 1710, aged 17, at Queen's College, Oxford; in 1709 he became a student of the Middle Temple, and on 4 Aug. 1715 took his LL.B. Lambeth (Foster's *Alumni Oxonienses*). Appointed Chancellor of Lichfield in 1735, he resigned in 1740 (Harwood's *Lichfield*, p. 192).

† See *ante*, p. 55.

‡ See *ante*, p. 54.

§ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 227, 230.

|| See *ante*, p. 60.

¶ *Reades of Blackwood Hill and Dr. Johnson's Ancestry*, pp. 143, 194.

** *Ibid.* p. 195.

†† This clause was not directed specially against Michael. The husbands of Mrs. Johnson's two sisters had to give similar bonds.

Harriotts;* but "the humility of distress" caused him to refer to her, after this legacy, as "our good cousin Harriotts."†

No wiser way of spending this legacy, so that Michael might have no cause of jealousy, could have been devised than that Mrs. Johnson should allocate it to the college education of their son, towards which it would be a considerable contribution. Dr. Birkbeck Hill, in his account of Oxford in Johnson's time, says that "his college bills came to only some eight shillings a week. Fifty pounds, no doubt, would have covered, and much more than covered, his whole yearly expenses. Whitfield, who was, however, a servitor, only cost his relations about eight pounds a year."‡ If, as Croker and Dr. Birkbeck Hill concluded, Johnson was really in residence at Oxford little more than twelve months,§ it is therefore quite possible that forty pounds covered all his expenses while there.

If obscurity veils the causes which led to Johnson's going to Oxford, quite as much does it veil almost his whole career at the great seat of learning to whose name and fame he displayed such loyal devotion in after life; and research has done little to throw light upon it. But that his two years of "idleness" at home had not ill equipped him for his new surroundings is fully proved by the remark of Dr. Adams, afterwards Master of Pembroke, that the ungainly son of the Lichfield bookseller, with the dust of his father's volumes scarcely removed from his shabby coat, was "the best qualified for the University that he had ever known come there."||

* See *ante*, p. 60.

† Birkbeck Hill's *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, I., 132.

‡ *Dr. Johnson, His Friends and His Critics*, 1878, p. 9.

§ Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, I., 78.

|| *Ibid.*, I., 57.

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